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THE WORKS

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM BRIDGE, M.A.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF EMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN GREAT YARMOUTH, NORFOLK.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED.

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A

LIFTING UP FOR THE DOWNCAST,

IN CASE OF

1.—GREAT SINS. 2.—WEAKNESS OF GRACE. 3.—MISCARRIAGE OF DUTIES. 4.—WANT OF ASSURANCE. 5.—AFFLICTION. 6.—TEMPTATION. 7.—DESERTION. 8.—UNSERVICEABLENESS. 9.—DISCOURAGEMENTS FROM THE CONDITION ITSELF.

IN THIRTEEN SERMONS,

PREACHED AT STEPNEY, A.D. 1648.

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TO THE READER.

Good Reader,

The following Sermons on Psalm xlii. I have perused, and find that they are the same which I preached divers years since, being then taken by a good pen as they fell in preaching. They have been long buried in silence, and should have rested in their grave, had not the importunity of some, who heard them preached, raised them from that death. Mine own notes were not legible enough for the press: in answer therefore to their desires, I have corrected these: some things I have altered, some things added, and some repetitions (fit enough for the pulpit) I have filed off; what is wanting let thy goodness supply. I have also joined with them, some other Sermons, of more doctrinal concernment, these being mostly practical, that so thy mind and heart may be at once exercised; wherein I have rather applied myself to the instructive part of preaching, than to scholastical disputation. For I know the Universities have able and faithful men, more fit for that work. Neither have I undertaken any English adversary; and if I have trodden upon any man's toes, I hope he will excuse me, for I can say truly, Sir, I saw you not. And if any man shall say to me, as David's brother Eliab spake to him, 1 Sam. xvii. 29, "I know thy pride, and malice of thine heart, that thou art come down to see the battle:" I might answer, as David did, "Is there not a cause?" When strange opinions and errors are daily published, is there not a cause, that every man, who loves the truth, should bear his testimony for it? In performance therefore of mine own duty, and for thine establishment, I have spoken something to many truths, which are now questioned. Hold fast what thou hast, lest another take thy crown. "And the Lord Jesus Christ and our God, even the Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort thine heart, and stablish thee in every word, and good work."

Thine in the service of the gospel,

WILLIAM BRIDGE.

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A

LIFTING UP FOR THE DOWNCAST.

SERMON I.

THE GOOD MAN'S PEACE.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I will yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."—PSALM XLII. 11.

IN these words ye read of the sad discouragements of a gracious spirit, with those remedies that be applied and used against them. The discouragements are expressed in two words, under two similitudes: cast-down, disquieted. As a man is bowed or cast down under the weight of some heavy burden, so art thou cast down, O my soul, says David: and as the sea in the time of a storm is much disquieted, so art thou also disquieted within me, O my soul. The remedies that he useth against these discouragements are two: self-reprehension and self-admonition. First, He doth chide himself for his diffidence and distrust in God: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?" He chides and rebukes himself for it. Secondly, He doth admonish and call upon himself for to wait upon and hope in God: "Hope thou in God." Why? I. Because I shall yet be delivered: "For I shall yet praise him." II. Because salvation belongs unto him alone: "He is the health of my countenance," or, "the salvation of my countenance." III. Because he is in covenant with me, and I with him; he is my God: "The health of my countenance, and my God."

I begin with the former part of this verse, wherein you may observe these three things:

First, That there is an inward peace and quietude of soul, which the saints and people of God ordinarily are endued with. This is implied.

Secondly, It is possible that this peace may be interrupted,

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so far as God's people may be much discouraged, cast down and disquieted.

Thirdly, That the saints and people of God have no reason for their discouragements whatever their condition be. Why art thou cast down, and why art thou thus disquieted within me? Thou hast no reason for it.

The latter of these being the main, is that indeed which I specially aim at; but because the two former will give the better rise unto this last, and they are also profitable for us to consider, I shall take them in their order, and speak only unto the first at this time, which is this:

There is an inward peace and quietude of soul which the saints and people of God ordinarily are endued with.

Therefore David says here, "Why art thou cast down, and why art thou disquieted within me?" It seems, then, that this was not his ordinary temper, his pulse did not always beat thus high in this way of discouragement; but ordinarily he had peace and quiet within. So that I say, there is an inward peace and quietness of soul, which the saints and people of God ordinarily are endued withal. Ordinarily they are arrayed in white, so they are brought in Rev. vii. 13, 14. What are these which are arrayed in white robes? At the 13th verse, "They are such as have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," verse 14. This book of the Revelation doth attend much unto the Jewish customs, and among the Jews they had their mourning and their rejoicing garment. The mourning garment was a black garment; and therefore when a man is brought in, in a mourning way, he is brought in in a black garment, as ye find in the next Psalm, the xliiird, and the 2nd verse, "Why go ye in mourning? The word קדר signifies black. "Why go ye in black, because of the oppression of the enemy?" So that the mourning garment was a black garment; the black garment was the mourning garment. And the white garment was the rejoicing garment; therefore, Eccles. ix. 8, it is said, "Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment." Upon which account the nobles amongst the Hebrews were called חורים, because they were clothed with white raiment.* Eccles. x. 17, "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles;" Hebrew,

* Martinus de Roa sing. S. Script. Lib. ii. cap. 1.

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בן-חורים the son of princes, or of those that are in white. I confess this phrase doth sometimes note the purity and holiness of the person, so Rev. iii. 4, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." But ordinarily it notes the joyfulness and comfortableness of our state; so in Rev. vii., the saints are brought in, in white, not only because of their purity and cleanness, but because of their rejoicing. I say then ordinarily the saints and people of God go in white, they have a peace and a rest within. "Great peace have they that love thy law (says the Psalmist), and nothing shall offend them." Rom. ii. 10, "But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the gentile." Let him be what he will be, if he be godly, if he work that which is good, glory, honour and peace shall be upon him; not only an outward, but an inward peace he shall have.

And, indeed, how can it be otherwise? For the saints and people of God do walk with God, they converse with God, they do acquaint themselves with God. Now if ye look into Job xxii. 21, ye shall find that this acquaintance bringeth rest and peace: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." The saints and people of God are, as I may so speak, of God's special acquaintance, and so they have peace, for they do walk with God, and have communion with him. They have communion with the Father, and he is the God of all consolation; they have communion and fellowship with the Son, and he is the Prince of Peace; they have communion and fellowship with the Spirit, and he is the Comforter: they have communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit, in and by the gospel; and that is the word of peace, the gospel of peace. How can it therefore be, but that the saints and people of God ordinarily should have peace within?

But to make out this more fully unto you. Consider, I pray, how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with whom the saints and people of God have communion and fellowship, are engaged for their peace.

1. The Father is engaged to give peace unto them. He is engaged by his prerogative, by his commandment, by his promise, by Christ's purchase and by the saints' chastisements.

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He is engaged by his prerogative. Kings and princes will stand, ye know, for their prerogatives. And this is the great prerogative of God the Father, to give peace, inward peace. "I create the fruits of the lips, peace, peace," Isa. lvii. 19. And he is called, the God of peace; the God of consolation: not the God of indignation, not the God of war, but the God of peace. This is the great prerogative of God the Father, to give peace unto his people.

He is engaged also, by virtue of his commandment. And therefore if ye look into Isa. xl. 1, 2, ye shall find, that he commands the prophets and ministers, to preach comfort, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God (verse 1); Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Suppose a man's affliction, or temptation, be very great or much: he hath commanded us to comfort, and comfort twice; "Comfort ye, comfort ye:" not once, but twice, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord." But there are divers comforters, that are indeed like Job's comforters, like Job's friends, they speak hard words unto poor distressed souls. Well, says he, therefore, in verse 2, Speak ye comfortably, so ye read it; but in the Hebrew, speak ye to the heart, עַל-לֵב speak soft and sweet words, speak to the heart of Jerusalem. Oh, but my temptation is so great, that I am not able to hear those that come to comfort me. Mark what follows: speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her, lift up thy voice and cry, if a poor soul be distressed, tempted and cannot hear easily; you that are ministers, lift up your voice and cry: not only speak to the heart, but cry; lift up your voice and cry unto her. Well, but what are they to speak and cry? There are three things which will comfort a poor distressed soul, and they are to be spoken. Say, first, "that her warfare is accomplished;" affliction and temptation is at an end, it shall be no more. Secondly, "That her iniquity is pardoned." Her sin is forgiven fully and freely. Thirdly, "That she hath received at the Lord's hands double for all her sins," God hath no more against her, no quarrel, no controversy, no further punishment to inflict upon her, she hath sufficiently born the punishment of her iniquity: thus the Lord hath commanded

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ministers for to preach peace, and to preach comfort; and what God hath commanded us to speak, he hath engaged himself to work. Thus, I say, the Father is engaged by virtue of his commandment.

He is engaged also, by virtue of his promise. And therefore, if ye look into Psalm xxix., ye shall see what the Lord hath promised: verse 11, "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." Here is the promise, "The Lord will bless his people with peace." Yea, if ye look into Isaiah xxvi., ye shall find there, that the Lord hath promised to keep the peace of his people for them, verse 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." So ye read the words, but according to the Hebrew, they ought to be read thus; שלים שלום תצר: Thou wilt keep peace, peace: twice peace. Thou wilt keep peace, peace, for him whose mind is stayed on thee. So that the Lord is not only engaged to give peace unto his people, but he is by promise also engaged to keep their peace for them.

Yea, the Lord is engaged by purchase. Christ hath purchased peace for his people; and what Christ hath purchased for them, God the Father is engaged to give unto them. Read the purchase in Eph. ii. 13, 14, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace." Verse 16, "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace unto you that were afar off, and to them that were nigh." So that thus ye see it is the purchase of Jesus Christ: this inward peace and quietness of soul, it is Christ's purchase; and what Christ the Son hath purchased, God the Father is engaged to give.

Yea, the Father is engaged to give peace unto his people, by all those chastisements that they do meet withal. And therefore in Isaiah xl, which I named before, the Lord commands us to comfort and speak comfortably unto his people, upon this account, "For she hath received of the Lord's

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hand double for all her sins." Even because a fulness of chastisement had been upon them. Thus, I say, God the Father, by virtue of his prerogative, by virtue of his commandment, by virtue of his promise, by virtue of Christ's purchase, by virtue of chastisements that are laid upon his people, is engaged to give peace unto his children.

2. But now proceed a little, and ye shall see, that as the Father is engaged, so the Son also is engaged to give peace, inward peace, and quietude of soul unto his servants.

He is engaged by those qualifications and endowments that he received from God his Father, for this end and purpose. Isa. lxi, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me (says he) and he hath anointed me," why? "that I might comfort those that mourn." That is one end. But I pray look into Isa. l., and consider the 4th verse, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." They are plainly the words of Christ, as will appear to you, if you read but the following words: "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned I away the back; I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." So that these are the words of Christ. Well, what doth Christ say here? He tells us, that he hath received the tongue of the learned, to comfort those that are distressed and troubled in conscience, for to help poor wearied souls. Why doth he say, the tongue of the learned? "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned." All men desire to hear the learned: and it is the greatest piece of learning in the world, to speak a word in due season by way of comfort to those that are weary; this is the greatest piece of ministerial learning, and saith Christ, "He hath given me the tongue of the learned." Well, but all learned men have not wisdom to speak in season. Mark what follows. "He hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." But hath Jesus Christ such skill at this work, in comforting those that are troubled? Yes, "He wakeneth morning by morning." As a master is early up in the morning to teach his scholars, so

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hath God the Father been teaching of Christ from all eternity this great skill: "Morning by morning he wakeneth, morning by morning he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." This is the piece of learning, says Christ, which I have been learning morning by morning of my Father from eternity, and this is that great learning which he had attained unto. So that in regard of this endowment which he hath received from the Father, he is engaged to give peace unto his people; for he hath received the tongue of the learned for this end and purpose, that he might speak a word in season to them that are weary.

He is engaged also, by his own disposition; his sweet, loving, and tender disposition. He is a lion, indeed, of the tribe of Judah, but not that roaring lion seeking to devour. He is a king, indeed, but he comes meekly, riding upon an ass's colt. "He doth not lift up his voice in the streets." When our Lord and Saviour Christ left the world, he said unto his disciples, "My peace I give unto you; my peace I leave with you: not as the world gives peace, but my peace I give unto you," John xiv. 27. And as soon as ever Christ rose from the dead again, and met with his disciples, what doth he say unto them? When they were all met together, "Peace be unto you," John xx. 19. As it was his last words when he left them, so it is the first word that now he useth when he seeth them again. But, O Lord, we have sinned greatly since we saw thee. Be it so, yet "peace be unto you." But, O Lord, here is Peter among us, that hath denied thee since thou sawest us. Be it so, I know it very well, yet "Peace be unto." Peace when he went away, and peace when he came again: this is his language and this is his disposition still. Thus he is engaged.

Yea, he is engaged by office to give peace unto his people. Ye know the apostle calls him our great High Priest. It was the work of the high priest in the Old Testament, to bless the people; and when he did bless the people, what did he say, but, "The Lord bless ye, and give ye peace?" Now then, if Jesus Christ be our great High Priest, and it be the office of the high priest to bless, and to give peace, then Christ, by virtue of his office also, is engaged to give peace unto his people. Take all these three together; Christ the second Person is engaged: by his endowments he received

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from the Father; by his own disposition; by his office; and it appears plainly, that there is a great engagement upon Jesus Christ to give peace unto his servants.

3. As the Father and the Son are engaged to give peace and quietude unto the saints and people of God, so also the Spirit, the Holy Ghost is engaged to give peace unto them. For, as I may so speak with reverence, he is, as it were, the great executor of Jesus Christ. When Christ died, he made his will, and gave a legacy to his disciples, "My peace I give unto you:" and then he sent the Comforter, the Spirit from heaven on purpose to beget peace within their souls.

Yea, the Holy Ghost is not only this executor, to see this will of Christ fulfilled, but he is, as it were, our advocate. Indeed we have but one advocate, that is Christ: but I say, we have, as it were, two advocates; one in heaven above, and one in our bosom. When a man sins, a godly man sins, Satan accuses him in heaven: and therefore says John, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John i. 2. But if a godly man sin, Satan doth also accuse him to himself. And therefore says the apostle, "We have the Spirit within us, making intercession." And says our Saviour Christ, "I will send another Comforter," John xiv. 16: so ye read it; but it is the same word that is translated Advocate; "I will send you another Advocate."* Yea, the Spirit of the Lord is our witness also; "For the Spirit shall bear witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Now when the Spirit bears witness with a man's spirit, that he is a child of God, then he hath peace and quiet. So that, if you consider all these engagements, the Father engaged, the Son engaged, the Holy Ghost engaged, for the peace and quiet of God's children, must you not needs conclude this point and doctrine, and say, Surely, there is an inward peace and quietness of soul, which ordinarily God's people are endued withal?

But our experience seems to speak the contrary; for there are many of God's own people, that have not peace and quiet within them; but are full of doubts and fears about their everlasting condition.

The second doctrine therefore speaks to that, Is it possible this peace may be interrupted.

* αλλον πυρα κλητον. Et sic translat. Syriac.

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But some have never had peace all their days. Oh, says one, I have been a long while afflicted, troubled: two, four, six years, and never yet had peace and quiet within me. Either therefore this doctrine is not true, or else I am not godly.

All that may be which you speak of, and yet this doctrine may be true. General rules have always some exceptions. Though the garment that the saints do ordinarily wear, be white, yet here and there some do go in black, and go so a great while. But that there may be no stumbling concerning this matter, I shall desire you to consider with me, some few distinctions.

1. Ye must know, that there is a fundamental peace, which the saints and people of God have; and there is an additional peace. A fundamental peace, which does naturally arise and flow from their justification: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," Rom. v. And then there is an additional peace, which arises from the sense of their justification. Possibly a child of God may for a long time lose the latter, but the former he shall never lose. As a woman that hath a great jointure, goes abroad some journey, and meets with thieves, and they take away all the money that she hath about her; but yet, says she, though they have taken away my spending money, they cannot take away my jointure, I have not lost my jointure. So now the saints sometimes, may lose their spending money, they may lose the peace that arises from the sense of their justification; but as for the peace that arises and issues from their justification itself, the first peace, that they shall never lose. Peace is the church's jointure, and that peace they shall never lose.

2. Ye must know, that there is a great difference between peace, comfort and joy. A man may have peace that hath no comfort; a man may have comfort that hath no joy: one is beyond the other, one a degree above the other. As now, it may be day-light, and yet the sun may not shine forth; the sun may shine forth, and yet not noon-day. Possibly a man may have peace, and yet not much comfort, only stayed upon God; possibly a man may have comfort, and yet not much joy. But now, many a poor soul thinks, because he hath no joy, therefore he hath no comfort; and because he hath not

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much comfort, therefore no peace. Labour to know the difference between these.

3. Ye must know, that there is a peace which lies in opposition to what one hath been; and a peace, that is in opposition to what one would be. A godly man, a weak christian, when he considers what he would be, and what he would have, he hath no rest nor quiet: but now, come unto the same man, and say thus, You remember what a wicked life once you led; ye were a drunkard, or ye were a wanton: what say ye; would ye be in that condition again? Oh no, saith he then, I would not be in that condition for all the world. Here now the soul hath peace in opposition to what it hath been, though it hath not peace and quiet in opposition to what it would be.

4. Ye must know, that there is a secret, dormant peace; and there is an awakened and apparent peace: peace in the seed, and peace in the flower. As it is with many a wicked man, for the present he hath great comfort; but when affliction comes, and the day of death comes, then he hath trouble; trouble in regard of sin; why? the sin and guilt was in his heart before, only it lay sleeping there, but now it is risen. So with a godly man in regard of his peace: possibly for the present, he may be full of trouble; but when affliction comes, and the hour of death comes, then he hath peace and comfort: why, it was there before, it was at the bottom, only he was not aware of it, he did not know of it. For now, ask such a weak christian who is thus full of fear for the present, Ye see there is a drunkard, a swearer, a wanton, would you be in his condition? would you be contented to be in that man's condition? Oh, no, says he; I would not be in such a condition for all the world. And why doth he say so, but because there is a peace and quietude at the bottom, although he be not aware of it? It is true the saints grieve, but then *dolent et de dolore gaudent;* they rejoice that they can grieve: they are troubled for sin; and they have rest and quiet in this, that they can be troubled for their sin: they have no peace in their sin; but they have peace in this, that they can have no peace in their sin. For say now unto them, are ye troubled that ye are troubled; you are in some measure grieved for sin; and

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are ye troubled that ye are grieved? No, will they say, I am glad that I am grieved for sin; and the Lord knows, it is my trouble that I can be grieved no more; I have quiet and peace in that I am troubled. Some have peace in the direct act, and some have peace in the reflex act, some have it more at the first hand, and some have it more at the second hand. But consider all these distinctions, and you will find, that there is no godly man, but more or less in some of these respects, he may be said to have peace within. But suppose it be so, what is the issue of this doctrine? what doth it tend and lead unto?

The issue is thus much. Then, behold, what a blessed condition the saints and people of God are in! Is it not a blessed thing to have peace within; to have quiet, peace and rest within? If ye have peace within, though ye want peace without, you will be able to bear all your burdens, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities," Prov. xviii. 14. But a wounded spirit who can bear? Some bear agues and fevers; some bear stones and collicks, rackings and tormentings; but a wounded spirit who can bear? Oh, but "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities," if he have peace within; if he be heart-whole, as they say, if he have peace within, then will he be able to bear all his burdens. Ye see into what times we are now fallen; we cannot promise ourselves peace for a day together; suddenly a cloud may arise, in a night, and all our comforts laid in the dark; how good a thing is it then to have peace within, to have rest and quiet within! If I have peace within, I can relieve myself here against all calamity. What though I have trouble from my friends? yet I have peace within: what though I am thus reproached? yet I have peace within; I am wet indeed, my garment is wet; but I am not wet to the skin, I am dry within, I have peace within. "Blessed (says our Saviour) are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted," Matt. v. 4. Are those blessed for the present that shall be comforted? How blessed are those then that are comforted, and that have peace and quiet already.

This doctrine looks wishly, both upon the ungodly, and upon the godly. It looked once so wishly upon a great man in Germany, that it was the beginning of his conversion and

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turning to God: I mean Galeacius Carracciolus. He was a papist, a profane person; and coming occasionally to hear Peter Martyr preach, he heard this expression or similitude, When ye see men at a distance skipping, leaping and dancing, ye think the men are mad; but when ye draw near to them, hear what music they have, then ye do not wonder; but ye rather wonder at yourselves that ye should wonder at them. So, said Peter Martyr, when ye look upon the godly at a distance, and see them running after ordinances, and frequenting the means and rejoicing in the ways of God, you think the people are mad, and ye say they are mad; but if you draw near to a godly course, and perceive what music these people have within, you say not they are mad, but you rather wonder at yourselves, that you should wonder at them. Hereupon the Marquess hearing this similitude, was so stricken withal, that he began to look into his condition, and it was the first occasion of his conversion. I say no more. You that are ungodly, ye hear what music the saints have within, peace and quiet within, ordinarily, though here and there there may be some exception; yet ordinarily, what music they have within! Oh, who would not be godly!

But this doctrine also, looks wishly upon you that are godly. And it calls for your thankfulness, that you should praise the Lord for the peace and quiet that you have. You will praise God for your outward peace, especially if it be a peace after war, especially if the war were a civil war, and ye have felt the smart of it, then ye will praise God for peace. You that are godly, and have peace, have had a war within, a civil war within your own bosoms, and ye have felt the smart of trouble of conscience, and now ye have peace; and will ye not be thankful? will ye not praise the Lord, that hath given you this peace and rest?

I confess indeed, it is the duty of all those that have rest, and peace and quiet within, to be very thankful; but there is one thing that hinders my thankfulness, that I cannot praise the Lord for the peace and quiet that I have, and that is, I fear my peace is not right; for there are many that have a counterfeit and a false peace, and I fear that my peace is such, and therefore I cannot praise the Lord, or be thankful for it.

I grant ye, there is a false and counterfeit peace, that

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wicked men have, even an inward peace. And if ye look into Deut. xxix. 19, ye may read as much: "And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." So that a man may be in a most cursed way, adding drunkenness to thirst, and yet he may have peace, and say in his heart, It shall go well with me. Questionless, there is a peace of security; there is a peace and a rest of sleep, as well as of health. A man that is wounded and full of aches and pains, feels them not when he is asleep; but the reason why he doth not feel them, is not because of his health, but because he is asleep. So a man may be freed from the trouble of aches and pains within, because he is asleep, as well as because he is in health. But there is also a peace that is the fruit of the Holy Ghost; as ye read in Gal. v: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." Questionless, there is a false and a true peace. But shall I say, that all my money is counterfeit, because there is counfeit gold abroad?

But to help a little in this; I will speak something of the difference of true and false peace; and yet very briefly, thus:

True saving peace is the child of grace, and the mother of grace. There is a peace that arises from the apprehension of God's common goodness; which is common peace. And there is a special peace, that arises from the apprehension of God's special favour and free grace; true peace is the daughter of that grace, yet it is the parent of inherent grace, or of gracious actions, I should rather say the nurse, for says the apostle, "The peace of God that passes all understanding, keep (or guard) your minds and hearts," Phil. iv. 7. This saving peace, is a guard unto all our graces. As false peace is a guard to our sins, so true peace is a guard unto all our graces.

True saving peace, is such a peace as is wrought by faith. "Being justified by faith, we have peace," Rom. xv. "The Lord give you peace in believing," says the apostle." It comes in a way of faith: true saving peace is wrought by faith. False peace, is such as is either born with us and was never interrupted, being the offspring of nature only; or the

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emanation of a natural conscience, or such as is wrought out by time, time working out one's trouble.

True saving peace, will live in the sight of sin. False peace doth not endure the sight of sin; a godly man, the more he doth see his sin, unless he be under temptation, the more peace he hath: a wicked man, the more he doth see his sin, the less peace he hath; and all his peace arises from a not sight of his sin.

True saving peace loves to be examined, is willing to be examined, it loves to be tried. But false peace, cannot endure examination, it flies from the light, it doth not love to be tried.

True saving peace is spoken by God. "I will hear what the Lord will say, for he will speak peace," says the Psalmist, Psalm lxxxv. 8. When God speaks peace, he speaks it to a soul under or after temptation. When God speaks peace, he speaks it with a strong hand: giving such peace as no creature in the world is able to give. When God speaks peace, it is a peace beyond all expression; the peace of God that passeth all understanding, it cannot be uttered. Now though a wicked man have peace, and much peace and quiet within, yet God doth not speak it; for it was not spoken to him in or after temptation, it was not spoken by a strong and unresistible hand; it is such a peace, as may be wrought by time, time working off the trouble; or the pleasures and contentments of the world may beget the like; it is not a peace that is beyond all expression, a peace beyond all understanding, but a low peace, which you may easily express. But now as for you that are godly, that make this objection, and have this fear and scruple in your hearts, I will here appeal unto your own souls; you know and remember your former trouble; now ye have peace, and ye have rest within; I appeal to you, I say, whether yea or no, when ye were in that trouble, suppose I, or another minister, or ten other of your own choosing, suppose a hundred should have come to you with one promise after another, had we been able to have spoken comfort to you? Oh, no; if the Lord had not spoken comfort to me, it had not been in the power of all the ministers in the world, to have spoken comfort unto my soul, but the Lord certainly hath done it. Yet I appeal

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to you; are you not willing to have your peace examined? are you not willing to have your peace, your inward peace tried? yes, with all my soul I would have my peace tried: and truly, I could not hope that my peace were right, if I were not willing to have it examined. Well, yet I appeal to you further; and do not you find that you have peace, even then when you do see your sins? and the more you see your sins upon the back of Christ, the more peace you have? yes; and do not you find this, that your peace came in, in a way of believing? from the sight of Christ, laying hold on the promise? by the prospect of free grace? yes, I must needs say so, had I not had a promise to stay my soul upon; had I not had a view of free grace; had I not seen the Lord Jesus, I had never had any peace in my poor soul: but the Lord knows, that thus I attained my peace. Well, then, be of good comfort, man or woman, I tell thee from the Lord, thy peace and quiet is right. I know what the danger is of sewing pillows under men's elbows, and speaking peace, where none ought to be spoken: but, I say, if it be thus with thy soul, notwithstanding all thy sins and fears, from the Lord, I say unto thee, thy peace is right; go in peace, and the God of peace tread down Satan under thy feet.

But I fear that my peace, my inward peace is not right because it doth not last and continue.

The second doctrine answers to that objection: for the second doctrine saith, That a godly man's peace may be interrupted.

But one thing yet troubles me, and makes me fear that my peace and quiet is not good, and that is, because I came so lightly and slightly by it. I see how it hath been and is with others of the people of God; some that have been long afflicted and wounded and have lien troubled a great while, and so they have had peace: but as for me, it is not so with me, I came lightly and slightly by my peace and quiet, and therefore I do even fear that the Lord never spake peace yet unto my soul.

Dost thou say lightly? how lightly? hast thou stolen thy peace? or have others bought their peace? for you say, others have been much afflicted and troubled, and had a great deal of heart-smart. But I pray tell me, did those who have had all this trouble, did they purchase, or buy their peace at the hand

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of Christ with all this trouble? or did Christ give them that peace and comfort freely? Buy it! no, surely; they did never purchase it, never buy it, but Christ gave it them freely. Why, if Christ gave it them freely after all their trouble, why may he not give it thee after less trouble? I have read, and so have you, in the gospel, a parable of two that came into the vineyard to work; the one in the beginning of the day, who bare the heat of the day, and the other at the latter end of the day; and both had a penny. When they were both paid, he that was there at the beginning of the day, murmurs, saying, I have been here all this day, and I have borne the heat of the day, and I have but a penny; and the other that came in at the latter end of the day, hath a penny as well as I: the man that had been there working at the beginning and heat of the day, he murmurs; but he that came at the latter end, he did not murmur, nor say, Surely, my penny is naught, because I have a penny given me, as well as he that hath borne the heat of the day. If any should complain, those that have borne the heat of the day, that have been so much troubled, should in reason be the persons, but hath the Lord taken you, and given you a penny, the same peace with him who bare the heat of the day; and will you complain, and say, Surely, my penny is false coin, and my peace naught, because I have not borne nor endured so much trouble as another hath? You know, some children are born into the world with more pain than others, some with less pain: should the child that is born with less pain, say, I am a bastard, because I was not born with so much pain as the other was? When Christ is formed in the souls of men and women, some are regenerate and born again with more pain, some are regenerate and born again with less pain: should he that is born with less pain, say, I am a bastard, and not a true son, because there was not so much pain at my first regeneration as such an one had? You know how it was with Zaccheus; Christ comes unto his house, and the same day that he came, he said to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house." He had assurance the first day. But Paul is converted; and he lies troubled, and is three days blind. Should Zaccheus now say, Surely, I am not converted, for I never lay three days blind, nor was so much troubled as Paul was? No surely, no more may you say, that your

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peace is false because you have not such abundance of trouble as others have; you are not to make another's measure your rule: God goes several ways with his people, as well in regard of peace, as in regard of grace. This therefore I say unto you, look unto your peace itself; have you peace and quietness of soul? Then bless and praise the Lord for that peace of yours: yea, do not only praise the Lord for your peace and quiet, but praise the Lord that ye came so sweetly by it, in a way of free grace; and if for any thing you are to be troubled, it is for this, that you should nick-name the grace of God, and call it little or false. Christ calls it free, and you call it false. Oh, be humbled for this, and praise the Lord for any measure of quiet and peace that he hath given unto thee.

But, will another say, all this doth not come up to my case; for I have no peace nor quiet in my soul to be thankful for: some there are that have peace and quiet indeed, and they, no question, ought to be very thankful for it; but my poor soul hath been long afflicted, troubled, and I never yet had assurance of God's love in Christ; I have not this peace and quiet within: what shall I do, that I may attain unto it? or what should a poor soul do, to get and attain this peace and quiet within?

Ye know what the Psalmist says, "I will hear what the Lord will say, for he will speak peace unto his people," Psalm lxxxv. 8. It is not in my power, or in the power of any poor creature, to speak peace unto you; but it is the Lord only that must speak peace unto thy soul; and the Lord speaks peace in the way of an ordinance.

But what does the Lord say? what does the Lord speak from his word in the way of an ordinance, that I who was never yet settled, may attain unto this inward peace and quietude of soul?

1. He wills you to study and consult much the death, sufferings and fulness of the satisfaction made by Jesus Christ; go down into the grave of Christ; Christ's blood is the object of faith, and faith brings peace: unbelief is a painful sin, and faith is an easing and quieting grace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace," &c., Rom. v. 1. The more you see the free and infinite love of God, the more will your heart be at rest and quiet within you. And where shall you

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see the love of God, but in the death of Christ? By seeing Christ on the cross, you see divine love in triumph. All true peace within, arises from sight of peace made without: where shall you read of that, but in Christ's death? And therefore says the prophet, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." In Psalm xli. ye have a promise made of a great blessing unto him that considereth the poor, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Who is this poor? Tarnovius tells us, from the 10th verse, that it is Christ in his sufferings: for, as he observes, this psalm is a psalm of Christ, verse 9th, "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me." They are the words of Christ, and Christ speaks this psalm; and this poor to be considered, is Christ in his sufferings: says he, I will not here debate the truth of this interpretation; but if true, the Lord promised here a blessing to him that doth wisely consider the death and sufferings of Christ: and wherein doth that blessing lie and consist?* "The Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble, רָעָה בְּיוֹם: in the evil day, or in the day of evil, saith the Chaldee paraphrase: in the day of vexation, saith Symmachus. Now the day of temptation, doubts and great fears, is an evil day, and a day of vexation: this day will God deliver him from, who doth wisely ponder on the death of Christ: could we see the heart of Christ, we should doubt no more, and in his death you may see his heart, in his blood you may see his heart. Ye know what the prophet Isaiah says, "Lord, wilt thou not ordain peace, who hast wrought all our works for us?" And where shall ye find that God hath wrought all our works for us, but in Christ's grave and death?

2. Ye must not only go unto the grave of Christ, and study his death, but you must go unto Christ himself for peace, he is the great peace-maker, hath a commission to take up all differences without us, and within us. Ye know his words, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned (says he), that I may speak a word in due season to him that is weary." Go then to Christ, and press this engagement, and

* Pauper hic Christus est; et beatos istos predicat qui dolores et cruciatus ipsius quos pro nobis sustinuit, grato et fideli animo recte considerant. Tarnovius in Psalmum xli.

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say, Lord, thou hast therefore received the tongue of the learned, that thou mayest speak a word in due season to him that is weary. And, O Lord, I am one of those wearied souls; wearied with my temptations, wearied with inward trouble; now, Lord, speak a word in due season to this poor, wounded, and wearied soul. Thus go to Christ.

Only in your addresses to Christ, be sure that ye go in uprightness. Take heed that you do not desire peace merely for the comfort of it, but as an help unto your grace: "He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from him that walks uprightly." Good men seek peace for grace sake; but wicked men and hypocrites, seek grace for peace sake. When you do make your addresses for peace, be sure you come to Christ in uprightness; and take heed that you do not desire peace only for the comfort of it, but as an help unto your grace.

And when you go unto Christ for peace, carry the promise with you, go in the way of a promise. Go and wait long on Christ, wait upon him only, and keep his way. Some say they do wait on God, but they do not keep his way, they throw up their duty if they have not comfort presently: but in your addresses to Christ, go and wait long on him; and in case that peace and comfort doth not come presently, lay by that great question a little, Whether you be in Christ or no, whether you be the child of God or no. The great trouble is this, Oh, I am afraid I am not the child of God, if I did but know that I am the child of God, I should have peace. If peace and comfort therefore do not come presently, lay that question aside a little, and in due time, Christ will answer that question too, only now for the present wait on him, and keep his way.

But, because it will be said, should not we be humbled for sin committed? and is not humiliation a good means to get peace within? Therefore, in all your humiliation, carry Christ along with you.* When you go to mourn for sin, begin aloft with Christ: and do not always think to begin below with sin, and so to come up to Christ; but begin aloft with Christ, and so by your humiliation, fall down upon sin. You say, Oh, but I would be first humbled before I do go to

* Oportet te sæpe agere quod non vis et quod vis oportet relinquere.

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Christ, but I pray tell me, can ye be humbled and not see your sin? and where can ye have such a prospect of sin, as in the death of Christ? is there any thing in the world, that can shew you the misery, ugliness, and damning nature of sin, as the death of Christ? If you begin with Christ, then you will certainly come down to your sin and be humbled for it: but if you begin with sin, you will not certainly come up to Christ. There is many a poor soul that hath said, I will be first humbled for my sin, and then I will go to Christ; but he hath stuck so long in the legal work, that he hath never come at Christ. And if you be humbled before you do come to Christ, you will have no great peace and comfort in your humiliation: but if you first come to Christ, and then carry Christ along with you to your humiliation, then you will have much comfort and peace therein, would you therefore be so humbled as you may have peace thereby; be sure of this, that you carry Christ with you unto that work, do not begin always with sin to go up to Christ, but rather begin at Christ, and so fall down upon sin.

Labour to mortify your affections, and to get your will melted into the will of God: as the winds are to the sea, so are the affections to the soul of man: so long as the sea is hurried with the wind, it hath no rest or quiet; and what is the reason that our hearts are no more calmed and quieted, but because we have not yet resigned up our wills to the will of God?* It is our own will that troubles our peace; get but your will mortified into the will of God, and you will say, Lord, I would fain have peace; yet not my will, but thy will be done: I would have peace presently, yet I have no will but thine; therefore, Lord, when thou wilt, and as thou wilt, not my will, but thine own will be done. Thus do, and you are at rest presently.

Dost thou want peace and comfort and quietude of soul? Take heed how you walk with doubting company; take heed how you walk with those that are full of fears and doubtings. As one drunkard doth make another, and one swearer doth beget another, and one opposer of godliness doth draw on another, and one adulterer doth make another; so one doubting christian doth make another. You that are weak,

* Propria voluntas turbat pacem.

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and full of doubtings, should go and lean upon those that are strong and have full assurance; and you that have assurance, should give the shoulder to those that are weak, and say, Come, and lean upon me, and I will be an help unto you. You know how it is with the ivy and the vine; the ivy leans upon the oak, and the vine upon the posts or the house-side; the ivy and the vine do not lean one upon another; if the ivy and the vine should come and lean upon one another, what twisting would there be; and both would fall to the ground: but the ivy leans upon the oak, and the vine upon the posts or the house-side. So a weak christian should go and lean upon a strong christian: but if one doubter leans upon another doubter, both will fall to the ground. I have read of a woman that was under great temptations, and meeting with another in the same condition, said to her, I am afraid I shall be damned; So am I to, said the other; Oh, but said she again, I do not only fear, but I am sure of it; certainly I shall be damned: Aye, but said the other, yet my condition is worse, for I am damned already. Here was damned and damned: Oh, said one, I shall certainly be damned; Oh, said the other, I am damned already. Oh, what communion is here! is this to build up one another? Do you therefore want comfort and peace? You that are weak, go and lean upon those that are strong, and have full assurance; and you that have assurance, be not unwilling to give forth your shoulder unto those that are weak, and are full of doubtings.

And to end all. Dost thou want peace and inward quietude of soul? Whensoever the Lord then doth but begin to speak the least peace unto thine heart, take heed that you do not refuse it, but rather improve it, and stir up yourselves then in a way of believing; praise God for every smile, and rejoice in the least: if a bowed sixpence, as it were, be sent you from heaven, lay it up, even every love-token. Peace is a tender thing. Doth the Lord begin to speak peace to any of your souls? now stir up yourselves in a way of believing, and then Christ will give you more.

Ye know how it was with Nathaniel: when Nathaniel believed upon what Christ had spoken, says Christ unto him, "Believest thou, because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree? I will shew thee greater things; thou shalt see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the

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Son of Man." So will the Lord Christ say to a poor soul, I have spoken a word unto thee, and I gave thee a little peace, and dost thou believe because of the word I have spoken unto thee? thou shalt see greater things, and I will give thee abundance of peace. Look into Isaiah xlviii. 18, and there you shall find the Lord speaking thus: "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." When the Lord speaks, and calls upon people to believe, if then they do hearken to him, then shall their peace be like a river. And when does the Lord call in a special manner upon people to believe? When he gives out a word, and when he gives them a little peace, then he is calling upon them to believe; now return, and now believe, says the Lord. Ye know how it was with Elijah: when they wanted rain, and had wanted rain for a long time, Elijah sends his servant towards the sea, to see if he could perceive any rain coming, and Elijah falls down upon his face in prayer; his servant goes, but no sign of rain: he goes again, and no sign of rain; and the seventh time Elijah's servant perceives a cloud, of the bigness of an hand, and he comes down unto his master, and tells him he had seen a cloud, the bigness of a man's hand: whereupon Elijah concludes and says, "Come, let us up, I hear the noise of many waters." So say I, you have been upon your face, and have been much discouraged, yet if you have been at prayer, and a little refreshment comes, though it be but the bigness of an hand, yet conclude and say, Surely, there is more rain a coming; Come, O my soul, why art thou cast down? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, and wait on him, I hear abundance of rain coming. When our Saviour Christ sometimes speaks peace, he doth at the first speak by a small word, and if that be improved, then he speaks more. Ye know how it was with Mary; she was at the sepulchre, and had been inquiring after her Lord, and says she to the angels, They have taken away my Lord; and the angels talked to her, but could not comfort her. But at last comes our Saviour Christ, and he speaks to her, and then she was comforted. But what does he say to her? Only one word; Mary: so when a man is in trouble, the Lord comes sometimes and speaks but a word, he takes a promise it may be,

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and sets on a word thereof upon the soul, and the heart answers, Rabboni, my Lord. Doth the Lord therefore speak but one word unto thee, yet stir up thyself in believing, and hearken unto him, for he will speak yet more fully and plainly; only when he speaks, listen: hearken diligently unto him and improve what he saith, so shall your peace be as a river, and your righteousness as the ocean.

And thus I have done with the first argument.

SERMON II.

TRUE PEACE MAY BE INTERRUPTED.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c"—Psalm xlii. 11.

IT is possible that the saints and people of God, may be much discouraged, and cast down: though there be an inward peace and quietness of soul, which they are ordinarily endued with, yet possibly this peace may be interrupted, and themselves much discouraged and cast down.

Here are two words in the text speak as much; *cast-down, disquieted.* And three times in this Psalm, the Psalmist saith, his soul was cast down within him; yet this David was a man of great peace and comfort ordinarily.

And as with David, so it was, is, and will be with other saints. This is so ordinary a case, that the Holy Ghost hath provided a standing psalm, or prayer, on purpose for such as are in this condition: Psalm cii., the title, "A prayer, or psalm, of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." In Psalm cxix. 25, he saith, "My belly cleaves to the dust;" and that is low indeed. And verse 28, "My soul melteth for heaviness:" I am not only sad and heavy, but my soul melteth for heaviness. Canticles v., the Spouse saith, "Her heart was gone;" or, "My soul failed within me." And if we look into Psalm cxliii., we find, at the 4th verse, that the Psalmist saith, "My spirit is overwhelmed, and my heart within me is desolate." What do all these expressions

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high, great and many, speak, but this truth that is now before us?

For the more full clearing and opening of it, I shall labour to show—

First, How far it is possible for a good man to be discouraged, or cast down.

Secondly, How it doth come to pass that he is so discouraged.

Thirdly, How those discouragements can stand with his grace and goodness.

Fourthly, How they may be healed and cured.

And first. If you ask, How far the discouragements of saints may reach? For, will some say, I know it is possible that the most gracious, holy man, may be much discouraged, but not with such discouragements as mine are.

1. I answer. What are yours? Are you so far disquieted, discouraged, cast down, as to refuse the word, promise, or consolation that is brought unto you? So far may the discouragements of the saints extend: Psalm lxxvii., verse 3, "I remembered God, and was troubled." He doth not say, I remembered my sin, and was troubled, but God; Yea, I was not only troubled, but "I did complain, and my spirit was overwhelmed within me." But when the promise came, and mercy came, and comfort came, did he refuse that too? Yes: verse 2, "My soul refuseth to be comforted."

2. Are you so far discouraged, disquieted, cast down, that your very body feeleth the smart of your discouragements? that you do not only refuse the promise, and all comfort for your soul, but even for your body? Then look into Psalm cii., and see if your case may not be paralleled, verse 4, "My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread: verse 5, "By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin:" verse 6, "I am like a pelican of the wilderness, and I am like an owl of the desert:" verse 9, "I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping:" verse 10, "Because of thine indignation and thy wrath; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down:" verse 11, "My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass." Oh, but I am not only so far discouraged, as to refuse comfort for

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soul and body, but my soul refuseth duty, and casts off duty too for the present.

3. Therefore, it is possible, that a good and gracious man's discouragements may extend thus far too. You will think it strange that I find an instance for this in that holy man Jeremiah; yet if you look into Jer. xx. 7—9, you find it made good. Indeed, saith he, "The word was as fire in my bones, and I could not forbear." But for the time he did resolve to forbear preaching in the name of God, which was his duty, which he had commission to do: for, says he, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." This holy, gracious man, was under temptation, he was much discouraged, and thereupon he said so. Yet, verse 13, he saith, "Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord; for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil doers." But then mark the next words; "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed." "Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born to thee." What a sudden change was here, even in the best of the saints, from encouragements to discouragements. Oh, but I have not only cursed the day of my birth, as Jeremiah, and wished that I had never been born; but I am weary of my life, and have sought after mine own death: and was there ever any godly, gracious man, that was thus discouraged, and cast down?

Yes. What think you of Job? "I was weary of my life," x. 1. And in the iiird chapter, Job, pouring out his complaint in regard of himself, he saith, verse 20, "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?" verse 21, "Which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures." Now ye know, that those which dig for gold and silver, dig industriously and earnestly. Thus it is with me, says Job, I am so afflicted, and distressed; and in such bitterness of soul, that I long for death, and dig for it as for hid treasures.

Oh, what a mighty deep of discouragements, may the saints and people of God fall into, and yet be godly, gracious!

Secondly, But why doth God suffer his own people and dearest children to be thus discouraged, and their peace to

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be interrupted? I know, will some say, that all our present joy and comfort, is but a creature, and so may be eclipsed; and that Satan is near unto the best of God's children, thrusting and pushing them forward into these discouragements, that they may be like unto himself who is a discouraged spirit: but why will God suffer it to be so?

In general, it is for their good, for their good they have, and for their good they do want their peace and comfort.* The star which led the wise men to Christ, did not always go before them, but sometimes it appeared, sometimes it was hidden from them: but both appearance and hiding was for their benefit; its first appearance invited them to Christ, and its withdrawance made them more diligent in seeking after him. So when Christ hid himself from his mother Mary, she sought him the more, and when she found him, she rejoiced the more: but both his absence and his presence, her fear and her comfort, was for her good; for his absence did increase and draw out her desires, and his presence did increase and draw out her joys. When God is absent from us, then we have testimonies of our love to God, by our desires after him; and when he is present, then we have testimonies of his love to us, by the shines of his countenance; so that whether God shines or not, whether we have comfort or not, both is for our good. Thus in the general, but yet more particularly.

1. Ye know it is God's way and manner to deal with the children of men, according to their own dispositions, to stoop and condescend unto their infirmities: therefore says the prophet Hosea, "He draws us with the cords of a man." Hosea xi. 4. Now it is man's disposition to come to God at the second hand: so long as man can find a fulness in any creature, he comes not to God; but first he sees an emptiness in the creature, duty and ordinance, and then he says, Oh what a fulness is in God himself, in Christ himself! "The widow that is desolate, trusteth in God," 1 Tim. v. 5; though a widow, yet if not desolate, sometimes, she

* Sic verus justitiæ sol nonnunquam oritur et ad nos accedit aliquando rursus a nostro climate aberrat utrumque tamen beneficium nostrum est.

Frumentum in terram jactum eget aliquo tempore ut congelatur et induretur aliquo etiam ut molliatur neutrum illi obest, utrumque necessarium est unum ut crescat alterum ut radices agat. Granat.

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would not trust; and therefore God suffers a desolation to come upon her widowhood. When David's men took up stones to have stoned him, then, says the text, "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God," 1 Sam. xxx. 6. So long as man hath encouragement elsewhere, he doth not encourage himself in the Lord his God. This being man's nature, and God having a design of love upon his own children, he suffers a damp and discouragement to pass upon all their comforts: their peace to be interrupted, their hearts disquieted, and their souls discouraged, that so they may encourage themselves in God alone.

2. This inward peace and quietness of soul, is so great a commodity, that God would have the price to be enhanced and raised. Common and ordinary blessings once lost, and found again, are extraordinary: it is a common and ordinary mercy that a man sits in his shop, and walks up and down in his trade; but if he be sick awhile, lose his health, and not able for five or six weeks to look into his shop; if then he can get down but one day, Oh, says he, what an extraordinary mercy and blessing is it, that I should go down again: thus the interruption of an ordinary blessing does raise it to an extraordinary. So long as a man hath his health and strength, though he be able to travel forty, fifty, three-score miles a day, he is not much affected therewith; but if he be sick a little, and at death's door, and then begins to recover, though he can but put forth his hand, or stir his leg, he blesses God, and says, Oh, friends, I can stir myself in my bed, I can move my hand, or my leg; what an extraordinary merey and blessing is this! So in this case, so long as a man hath inward peace and quietness of soul, without interruption, he looks upon it as a common mercy and blessing; but if his peace be a little interrupted, and his soul buffetted by Satan, and then he recovers his peace, Oh, says he, what an extraordinary blessing and mercy is this! Now God will sometimes raise the price of this commodity from an ordinary to an extraordinary blessing, and therefore he doth suffer his own children and dearest servants to be thus discouraged, and their peace to be interrupted.

3. God is a tender Father, and he would have all the love of his children; he would not have his children to love their nurse more than himself: our joy and peace and comfort, is

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but the nurse of our graces; now when God sees that his children fall in love more with the nurse than with himself, then he removes the nurse, and causes their peace to be suspended and interrupted: he will not have the nurse to be loved more than himself.

4. Sometimes God doth suffer this cloud to arise upon the peace and comforts of his people, that he may train them up unto more perfection; comfort is the children's milk: ye may observe, therefore, that the weaker christian hath sometimes more lively, sensible comforts, than the stronger christian hath; why? but because this inward joy and peace and comfort, is that milk and sweet honey, whereby they are drawn off from the pleasures and sweetness of the world; and as these comforts do wean us from the world's comforts, so we have need to be weaned again from these weaners, which God doth sometimes by restraining of them, and so we grow up unto more perfection.*

5. Sometimes, again, God sees his children do grow vain and light and frothy and wanton and secure under their peace and comfort, and then he withdraws himself, hides his face, and so they do lose their comfort. This was the case in Canticles v, where the spouse saith, "My soul faileth within me," at verse 6. But why? "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself:" and why had he withdrawn himself? He comes and makes a tender of love and mercy, verse 2, and she would none, verse 3, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" that is, I am now laid to sleep; they are words that import security, and upon her security he withdraws himself, and being withdrawn, her soul fails within her. And thus it is many times with the children of God in their particulars; the Lord sees that they grow secure, vain, frothy and wanton under their peace and comfort, then he withdraws himself, and their peace faileth.

6. Our Lord and Saviour Christ is a tender chirurgion, who hath set all our bones which we ourselves have broken

* Ignorandum non est consolationes spirituales esse infantium cibum et lac dulce quo Deus nutrit suos et a mundi voluptatibus avocat ut harum voluptatum inescati dulcedine alias omnes consolationes contemnant et amoris divini dulcedine capti omnem amorem mundi abjiciant.

Deus negat suis consolationes ut fiant perfectiores.—Granat.

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by our sins. You know that a wise and an honest chirurgion, though he desire his patient may be quickly cured, yet if he sees the plaister doth not lie right, he takes it off again, for it is not laid right, saith he: so doth Christ do, he sees that the comforts of his people sometimes are not right laid, and therefore, saith he, though I desire this poor wounded soul may be quickly cured, yet because this comfort, this promise, this experience doth not lie right, it must be taken off again. Now the comforts of the saints are so laid sometimes, as the very laying of them doth breed discomfort. As in the sowing of seed; it is not enough that the seed be good, but it must be well sown, else the very sowing thereof may cause weeds: so though light be sown for the righteous, yet sometimes it so is sown, as that the very sowing thereof doth breed these weeds of fears and discouragements, that you may say, and that without prophecy, Here is a poor soul that ere long will be much discouraged, though for the present full of comfort.

But this is hard to say: can ye foretel a man's discouragements, even in the time of his comfort? Who is there among all the saints so comforted, concerning whom you may say, Surely this man will be much discouraged again?

When a man, a good man, doth lay his spiritual comfort upon outward blessings, you may say beforehand, this man's comfort will never hold, but ere long he will be much disquieted; and this was the reason why the saints in the time of the Old Testament, laboured under so many discouragements, even because they measured the love of God so much by these outward blessings. Psalm cxliii. 4, "Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me." Why so? Verse 3, "Because the enemy prevailed:" he measured God's love too much by these outward things, and therefore when the enemy broke in upon him, he thought God did not love him, and so he was overwhelmed; thus in regard of all outward blessings. Seest thou therefore a man who raiseth his persuasion of God's love from the smiles of any creature, say of such a man beforehand, Oh, this poor soul ere long, will be in the dark, and under some discouragements.

When a man is unthankful for true peace, and unhumbled for false peace, he cannot hold his peace long. Before a man is converted, he hath peace within; "For when the strong

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man keeps the house, all is at peace;" but it is false peace: after a man is converted, he hath peace within, and it is true peace; God expecteth that a man should be humbled for his former false peace, and thankful for his present true peace. Now when God sees one both unhumbled for false peace, and unthankful for his present true peace, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, so it withdraweth, and the soul is comfortless.

When a man doth raise his comfort only from somewhat that he doth find within himself; from grace that he doth find within, and not from grace without; from Christ within, and not from Christ without; then his comfort will not hold; *perpetuum est quod habet causam perpetuantem*, that is perpetual, which hath a perpetuating cause: grace without is perpetual, Christ's own personal obedience in the merit of it, is perpetual; but the actings of grace within us, are not perpetual, or not perpetually obvious to sight, and therefore cannot perpetually comfort. Indeed, our grace within, and obedience, is in some respects a cause of our peace. 1st, A *causa sine qua non*, a cause without which we can have no comfort; for a godly man can have no comfort, if he have no obedience. 2ndly, A cause which doth, *removere prohibens*, remove what hinders our comfort, namely, our sin. 3rdly A cause witnessing: for there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, water and blood; water, which is our sanctification, is one. 4thly, A cause confirming; for by our obedience and sanctification, our justification is confirmed, and the sense thereof; so that obedience is one cause, but not the only cause of our peace, nor the principal: when therefore you see the streams of a man's comfort run in this channel, raising all his comfort only, or principally from his obedience, or acting of grace within, then you may say, though the stream be now full, stay but a little, and ere long you will see it dried, and this man will be much discouraged.

When a man, a good man doth lay his comfort, rather upon the impression, or comings in of the word, than upon the word itself. For example, suppose a man take the Bible, and upon the opening thereof doth pitch on some promise; for the present he is much refreshed and comforted: or suppose that he doth not open the Bible, nor read the Scripture, but sitting down in a dark condition, some promise

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doth come to him which before he thought not of; now at the coming of this promise, his heart is much raised, warmed and comforted, insomuch that he concludeth, saying, Now I am a child of God, now I know that God loves me, that I have a share in Christ: either this man raiseth his comfort from the word itself, or from the comings in of the word; if from the word itself, how can his comfort die? if upon the bare coming in of the word, how can his comfort live? For when a word comes not, then his comforts fail. We read in Psalm xvi., that "he shall multiply sorrows that hasteneth after another:" your translation reads it thus, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God;" but the word God, ירבו עצבותם אחר מהרו, is not in the Hebrew. The whole verse are the words of Christ; what saith he at verse 2? "Oh my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, my goodness, holiness, or righteousness is not for thee, but for the saints that are in the earth, and for the excellent in whom is all my delight." But O Lord, our Saviour, what if we do not go to thy goodness, holiness and righteousness, resting upon that alone? He answereth, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another." And is not this to hasten after another, when men rest upon the bare coming in of the word, or the impressions on the heart that are made thereby? Where do we read in all the Scripture, turn from one end of the Bible to the other, where do we read that Christ hath appointed any such way of comfort as this, that a man should raise his comforts from pitching, or by an opening of the book? If I pitch upon a promise to-day, and so have comfort, may I not pitch upon a threatening to morrow, and so have no comfort again? Where hath Christ appointed any such way as this, that I should measure God's love, or cast my everlasting condition by the coming in of a particular word? Indeed, God doth sometimes by his providence, upon the opening of the Bible, cause our eye to fall upon some promise, which is a providential comfort; he doth sometimes send a particular word to stay and bear up ones soul in a particular distress or affliction, but not that I should measure his everlasting love, or cast my condition by the coming in of every word. This therefore is to hasten after another; and how many sorrows are multiplied upon the hearts of

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God's people hereby? How many poor souls are there that walk in this way! God our Father sees it, that the plaister is not right laid, and so he is fain to take it off, but all from a design of love, to lay it right; and for these reasons God suffers his own people to be much discouraged.

Thirdly, but how can all this stand with grace? Can a man be thus comforted and discouraged, discouraged and then comforted again? thus to and fro in his comfort, yet in Christ, yet gracious, yet holy?

Yes: for though there be much evil in this traversing up and down, yet in the saints there is still a mixture of some grace withal, some grace mixed with their discouragements.* Take the saints and people of God, and though they be much discouraged and cast down, yet still they mourn after God; and though they cannot wait so patiently as they would, yet they say in truth, if they did but know that God would come at last, they would wait all their lives; here is grace; and though they cannot mourn for sins past, for which they are most disquieted, yet they dare not put forth their hand willingly unto any sin present. I have read of one that was so troubled and cast down, that he said and thought, I find so little comfort in my soul, that I would willingly suffer my body to live in burning fire until Christ's coming, so that I might but have the assurance of God's love and favour; and though I am persuaded I shall go to hell, yet my hope is, that my pains here will be mitigated there, in all which trouble, saith my author, nothing in the world could persuade him to do any thing willingly that was displeasing to God; this man was at the last comforted, and then he would often say, The devil took advantage of my sorrow for evil things, to make me unthankful for good things. But I speak this to shew, that the saints are never so discouraged, but still there is a grace that is mixed withal, they dare not sin.† Yea, and though by their very discouragements, they do sin against the gospel in unbelief,

* Revertere anima mea in requiem tuam, Psal. cxvi., observemus verbum revertendi quo admonemur, fieri quidem subinde, ut animus piorum optata requie privatur et variis discriminibus inquietetur verum juxta id accidere consolationis quod suo tempore conceditur illis divinitus ut ad quietam suam revertantur. Muscul. in Psal. cxvi.

† שמרים Fæces a שמר custodivit quia vina sua vi conservant.

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yet by the same discouragements they are kept from their sins against the law, these discouragements being as the lees that do keep the wines.

Yea, and though they do rest too much upon their righteousness, whereby their feet sink into divers sloughs, yet it is because they would be the more obedient to God their Father, and in the midst of all their discouragement profess in truth, I would give all the world for the presence of God; here is grace, a mixture of grace withal; no marvel therefore, that these discouragements may be in a godly gracious man.

But is there no evil in this, to be thus fluctuating to and fro, comforted and then discouraged? is there no evil in these discouragements?

Much, very much; I shall not enter into the particulars. But how can they improve Christ as they should in this condition? So long as a man's title for his land is in question, he cannot sow his ground, nor build houses; and if you ask him, Why do not you sow your ground, and repair your houses? his answer is ready, I dare not lay out much cost, because my title is in question: so here, so long as a man's title to Christ is in question, he cannot improve Christ as he should. If a man be going a journey, and know not his way, he loseth much of his way and of the comfort of it in inquiring after the way, and thinking whether he be right or wrong; when he comes at three or four turnings, there he stands while he might ride a mile, and when he comes above in the field, and sees a shepherd at a distance from him, he rides up to him to inquire whether he be in his way or not; yea, and all the day long he is thinking of his way, whether he be right; whereas, if he knew his way, he might have many precious thoughts of God and of the word. So in this case, while a man is doubting and fearing, and knows not whether he be in the way to heaven or no, how much precious time is lost! thoughts of Christ lost! thankfulness for mercy lost! Of all hearts, the Scripture saith, an unbelieving heart is an evil heart; and when men's hearts are discouraged and cast down, are they not unbelieving? Who would not therefore take heed of these discouragements, and of the interruption of their peace?

Fourthly, but suppose now that I have lost my comforts?

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Times were heretofore, when my soul was full of joy, but now I am quite discouraged; what should a poor soul do to recover his peace and comfort again, that uninterrupted peace may be restored?

Some things by way of question; some things by way of doctrine.

1. Hast thou forgot the years of the right hand of the Most High? hast thou lost all thy experience too? I know that usually when our comforts fail, our former experiences fail, yet not always; for the Psalmist saith here, "My soul is cast down," yet at the same time, verse 6, he saith, "Therefore I will remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." So Psalm lxxvii. The Psalmist having said at the 7th verse, "Will the the Lord cast off for ever; and will he be favourable no more; is his mercy clean gone for ever; and doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious?" he addeth in the same breath, "But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Ye know what the disciples said, "Did not our hearts glow within us while he opened the scriptures to us?" Luke xxiv. 32. Beloved! you have no comfort now, well, but you remember at such a time, when you were all alone in your chamber, and no soul was near you, how the Lord came and opened the scriptures, the promise to your soul, wherewith your heart did glow within you. Have you quite forgotten the openings of those scriptures to you; (I speak not of the glowings, for I suppose they are now gone) but are the scriptures gone that were then opened to you; did not you say in your last trouble and down-cast condition, if ever the Lord appear to me again, I will never doubt of his mercy more; and did he not appear unto you and open the promise unto your heart; and have you now forgotten these things? this is your infirmity, why should you not remember the days and times and works and experiences of the right hand of the Most High?

2. Do you not use the means for the restoring of your comforts in such a manner, as thereby you do lose them more? A man may have great desire after some preferment and place, which many ride for, but one is so hasty that he rides over hedge and ditch, and thereby falls and hurts himself, so others get before him, and by his too much

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haste, he doth lose his place. Thus it is sometimes with good people, they make so much haste to their comfort, that they lose it by their haste; they would have it sooner if they went on in an ordinary way of waiting on God without such posting haste; but they must have it to-day; oh let me know my interest in Christ to-day, saith one, or else I am undone for ever. Thus, by stinting and limiting God to a time, they tempt the Holy One, and so are more distant from their comfort; the more the child cries, and is froward under the rod, the longer is the rod continued.

Some seek comfort in a way of reason, and think to reason out their temptation, and to reason in their comfort, but as one saith well, Dispute not with God lest you be confounded, dispute not with Satan lest you be deceived.

Some again tire themselves in duty, neglecting of their calling; the truth is, prayer is a friend to comfort, and more than ordinary time is to be used in prayer for those that are troubled in conscience, but when men under temptations, and without comforts throw up their callings, thinking that nothing is to be done but prayer, by throwing aside their calling, they lay themselves open to more temptations of Satan, they do so tire out their natural spirits in duty, that they are flat and dead in duty, so their temptations are the more increased, and their comforts more distanced. Wherefore consider, if you would have comfort restored again, whether you do not use the means of comfort in such a manner, as to set you at a further distance from it.

3. Whether have you not strained, and reached for some outward comfort so far, as to lose your inward comfort? I read of Francis Spira, that when he was in horror of conscience, he could not with peace and quietness behold his wife and children, for, to get an estate for them he denied the truth, and therefore when they came before him in his trouble, he cried out in much horror, How terrible is the sight of these to me! They had been comforts to him before, yet now he could not away with the sight of them. Oh, thought he, for your sakes, and for your provision, I have denied the truth and yielded to these superstitions; and therefore says he, How terrible is the sight of these unto me! What peace or comfort had Judas in the sight of his thirty pence? Look what outward comfort a man strains his conscience for,

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that will be death unto him to behold. We read of David, that when his men had ventured for the waters of Bethlehem, he would not drink of it, but poured it out before the Lord, for, saith he, "Why should I drink the blood of these men?" He did not sin in desiring of it, nor did he command his men for to venture through the enemy's quarters, for those Hebrew words, מי יתן, *quis dabit*, who will give me? are but words of wishing, who will give me to drink of the waters of Bethlehem; that is, Oh, that I had the waters of Bethlehem: according to the Hebrew language, but though he sinned not in his desires, yet when he had the waters, he poured them forth before the Lord, and said, "God forbid that I should drink the blood of these men;" and will you drink the blood of your own conscience? Time was heretofore when you had peace and comfort, and by straining and stretching your conscience for your outward comfort, now you have lost your inward, will you not then take that outward comfort, and pour it forth before the Lord, and say, God forbid that I should drink the blood of mine own peace and comfort? How can any of you have peace, while those stolen and unrestored goods lie by you?

But alas! all my comforts do lie prostrate at the feet of my fears, that now I have no peace at all: what shall I do that my peace and comfort may be restored?

By way of direction, three things.

1. Look what you would do if you were to be justified, and do the same now: if I were to be justified, having a sight of my own sin and nature, I would, through grace, come to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and leave the weight of my poor, guilty soul upon it; which act of faith would justify me, and give me peace; for "being justified by faith (saith the apostle), we have peace with God."

And as faith doth justify and give peace at the first, so the renewing of this act of faith doth renew our peace; and what is my justifying faith, but in time of temptation to leave myself and condition upon Christ alone, saying, Whether godly or ungodly, whether in Christ or not in Christ, now I do not dispute, but leave myself upon Christ alone: this do again, and this will bring peace again.

2. You have now lost your comforts and the shinings of God's face: either God has withdrawn himself for your sin,

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or not; if not for your sin, he will return again, and that quickly too; if for your sin, labour more and more for to find it out, and to be humbled for it.

I know you will say, Oh, but now in this condition I cannot be humbled.

But withal remember, that in this condition, that goes for humbling which doth not before, and God will take that for humiliation now, which he would not take before. Psalm xxxii., saith David, "I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." *Dixit non fecit*, saith Austin, he said he would do it, but did not do it fully, yet thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. God took his humiliation although it was very low. Why? Verse 3, 4, we find him under temptation and in much discouragement, for saith he, "My bones waxed old with my roaring all the day long, day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer," yet how ready was God to receive an acknowledgment, and a little humiliation from him at this time.

Oh, but what is all this to us? this was David's case. Nay, saith David, this is not my case alone, for verse 6, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found." God will receive a little when you are much discouraged. Either therefore God hath withdrawn for your sin, or not; if not, wait but a little, he will return again; if for your sin, labour more and more to be humbled for it, for he will receive that measure of humiliation now, which he will not do at any other time.

3. Are all your comforts gone, and would you have them fain restored? Then read and read the Scripture much; if you cannot read yourself, get some others for to read them to you. When a man's mind is empty, as in temptation and want of comfort, it is empty of Christ, and full of fear, then it doth grind itself, as a quern or mill when empty of corn, one stone grinds another: the more full a man's mind is, the more free from temptations and fears. Now Scripture matter is the most filling matter, the more ye see Christ walking in the sweet shades of divine love toward poor sinners, the sooner will your faith revive, and your comforts be restored; and where can you see Jesus Christ walking, and taking his turns with poor sinners under the shades of

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divine love, but in the Scriptures? stand there awhile, and you shall see him, and your heart will say, And why not one turn of love with me, oh my Saviour? Study, read, and read much the scriptures.

But if I do read the scriptures, and read them much, I shall then meet with some promise, possibly many, and now I cannot apply them being thus discouraged as I am, I shall see the promises indeed, and say, There is such and such an old friend of mine, but it is now mine enemy, the promise will not own me, and I cannot apply it, and so it will do me no good.

Ye cannot tell what the promise will do till you come to apply it; the promise never gives down its power and strength till it be applied, it doth then work when it is put to work, and not before. When Moses saw his rod turned into a serpent, he was afraid of it, and fled from it, but when he put forth his hand and took it by the tail, it was a rod in his hand again, as it was before; it may be you look upon such and such a promise at a distance, and you say, Oh, there is my enemy, now it will not help me, it will sting me, it will undo me, but put forth your hand again to it, and it will become a promise, a rod in your hand, as comfortable as ever it was before.

And doth not the promise come to you? go you to it. Sometimes the promise doth come to us, sometimes we go to it; when the promise doth come to you, you have joy, when you go to it, you have peace, and this peace may last longer than the other joy; but remember this as an everlasting rule, that your very relying upon the promise doth make it yours.

But if I do read the scriptures much in this condition of my discouragement, I shall not only meet with the promise, but with a threatening, and that will discourage me more.

Not so, for if a threatening make way to the promise, and doth therefore come forth to meet you, that it may lead you to the promise, have you any hurt thereby? Now as the law was a schoolmaster to bring to Christ, so sometimes the threatening is a schoolmaster to bring you to the promise.

Yea, and God doth therefore sometimes send the threatening that it may lead you to the promise. You know how

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God appeared to Elijah, first in a wind that did shake the mountains and rocks, but God was not there; then in an earthquake, but God was not there; then in a fire, but God was not there; then in a still voice, and there was God. So when God appears to a soul, sometimes he doth first send a threatening, and shakes the rocks and mountains, and hard hearts, and his converting grace may not be there, but there is a still voice behind, the voice of the promise, God is there, and all this shaking of the threatening, is but to make way unto the still voice of the promise that is behind.

Oh, but if I should read the scriptures much in this condition, I should meet with many other things which concern not me, there are many histories in the Scripture which suit not with my condition, and so I should get no good or comfort.

Say not so; Christ cures, *per modum divertentiæ*, by way of divertency, as you do those that are grieved. If a friend have lost a husband, or wife, or child, you do not speak of the lost person and say, Oh, what a sweet friend, or husband, or wife, or child you have lost; but you speak of something else, and then afterwards you are able to speak of the person lost, but first you divert his mind from the matter of his grief, and so you do cure his grief. Thus doth Christ also when he cures a poor, wounded, grieved soul, he doth not always speak to the subject matter of grief in hand, but leads the heart sometimes into the consideration of other truths, and then afterwards doth speak unto the matter that is now concerning; he cures by way of divertency.

Study therefore, oh, study the Scriptures much, for thus the Lord will pour wine and oil into your bleeding wounds, and in due time you will say, as David did, "In the multitude of my thoughts, O Lord, thy comforts have comforted my soul," Psalm xciv. 19.

But suppose the Lord do restore to me the joy of my salvation, that the bones which I have broken may rejoice; suppose there be a return of peace and joy, what shall I do then?

I shall not need to tell you what then, you will tell me what then, for you will say, Oh, now I must be thankful, now

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I must believe, now I will never doubt of mercy and of grace again. Only take these few words of advice.

Be sure that you understand your comforts rightly; be not mistaken in them: labour to distil and refine your comforts. As there was a mixed company came out of Egypt, which set the Israelites a murmuring; so there is a mixed company that comes with your comforts. Every creature is born into the world with some filth; when you have comfort, labour to find out and separate the dross and filth, put away that mixed company. Rose leaves keep not long in the leaf: distilled comforts keep the longest.

If you would be rid of Satan from coming into your quarters, fall you upon his; the way to keep the enemy out of our country, is to fall into his. So deal with Satan, do him all the mischief you can; be not barely offensive, up and be doing against him.

If you would keep your comforts, put them all into the hand of Christ to be kept for you. A child that knows not how to keep his money, if he get a penny from any friend, he brings it to his father or mother, and saith, Mother, pray keep this penny for me. You have experience that you cannot keep your own comforts, you will lose and spend them quickly. As Jesus Christ is the Lord Treasurer of all our graces, so he is the Lord Keeper of all our comforts; and therefore, when God is pleased to give in any comfort to you, go to Jesus Christ, and say, Lord, keep my comforts for me, keep my evidences for me, keep my assurance for me: ye must not only depend upon Christ for graces, but for comforts; and as well for the keeping, as for the getting of them.

As you have any spiritual comfort from Christ, spend all for Christ: for though in temporal things, the way to have little, is to spend much; yet in spiritual things, the more you spend, the more you have. And therefore, whatsoever comfort you have, spend it with the saints. Do as Moses did: when Moses was in Pharaoh's court, and in great preferment, standing in the presence of the king, he went out to visit his brethren, and to comfort them under their burdens: "I will see (saith he) how it fares with my brethren, under their burdens." So do you also. Hath the Lord spoken peace and comfort to your soul, and do you now

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stand in the presence of the King of kings, having his face shining on you, with your comforts all restored unto you? Now then go out unto your brethren, and inquire who they are that labour under any burden, and with the same comfort wherewith you have been comforted yourselves, comfort others, knowing this for certain, that the more you spend, the more you shall have, and the longer you shall keep your comforts: yea, and this Christ expects, that what comforts we have from him, we should spend for him.

And thus I have also done with this second argument.

SERMON III.

SAINTS SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED WHATEVER THEIR CONDITION BE.

"*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c*"—Psalm xlii. 11.

HAVING spoken of the two first doctrines, the third followeth, which is this:

The saints and people of God have no true reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be.

David had as much cause and reason for his discouragements here as any other, for he did want ordinances, yea, he was kept from the ordinances; therefore, saith he, verses 1, 2, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come and appear before God?" Yea, after he had known the sweetness of them he was deprived of them, verse 4, "For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God." And in this condition he had many enemies, he was in the state of affliction and persecution, his enemies reproached him, they reproached him in the matter of his God, and that daily, verses 3 and 10, "While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? As a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"

And he was now under great desertions: though the enemies did reproach him in the matter of his God, yet if God

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had been present with him, he had been well enough; but they said, "Where is now thy God?" and his own heart said so too, that God had left and forsaken him, which was his failing, verse 9, "I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forsaken me?" yet for all this he saith, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" As if he should say, Thine enemies do not only reproach thee in the matter of thy God, but thine own heart; thou art now kept from those precious ordinances which once thou didst enjoy; yet why shouldst thou be disquieted or cast down? there is no reason for it. So that the words speak plainly this truth, A godly, gracious man hath no true scripture reason for his discouragements whatever his condition be.

It was a sad condition that the prophet Habakkuk did present unto himself, yet, saith he, chap. iii, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," verse 18. But oh thou servant of God, thou art now under a threatening, and not under a promise, which makes thy very belly to tremble, and wilt thou, canst thou now rejoice? Yes, saith he, verse 16, "When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones; yet will I rejoice in the Lord," &c.

But it may be thou thinkest this threatening will never be fulfilled. Yes, saith he, verse 17, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no meat in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord," &c.

But a man may rejoice, though he have no wine to drink or olive to eat, because these are but creatures which are for our refreshment: but wilt thou rejoice, O prophet, if thou wantest thy daily bread, and such creatures as are for our daily nourishment?

Yes, saith he, "Although the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord." So that whatever a godly man's condition be, he may rejoice, and there is no true reason for his discouragement.

Indeed, there is no sin so unreasonable, but the sinner thinks he hath reason for it; and so the saints and people of

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God may think, that they have reason for their discouragements: hence it is that they have so many whys and wherefores, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" "Why go I mourning?"

Yea, they may not only seem to have some reason, but, in a way of nature, they have reason for their discouragements; and therefore saith David, "When I saw the prosperity of the wicked, I said, I have cleansed my hands in vain, until I went into the house of the Lord," Psalm lxxiii. So that, so long as he was in the house of nature, and natural reason, he did see reason for his discouragement.

Yea, not only so, but take things asunder, and consider things by pieces, one from another, abstracting the means from the end, and so the saints may have a true and real reason for their discouragements, for every affliction is grievous. If the husbandman look only upon the breaking up of his ground, without respect to the harvest, he may well be discouraged, but take both together, and so he will not: thus if the saints consider their breakings apart from their harvest, they may see cause for their discouragements; but if they do consider their breaking up and their harvest together, the means and the end together; I say, take all together, and then, whatever their condition be, they have no reason to be cast down or be disquieted.

What is there in or for the saints that may be a sufficient bulwark against all discouragements?

I answer, A godly, gracious man hath propriety and interest in God himself. Some special men and women there are in the world, whom the great God of heaven and earth doth make over himself unto, and they that have him for their God and portion, have no reason to be disquieted whatever their condition be: thus it is with the saints, and therefore the Psalmist doth not barely say, that he would rejoice, but that God was "his exceeding joy," Psalm xliii. Satan may darken this light and joy for a time, but he can never put it out; all the saints and people of God are possessed of this. It is written of Antoninus the Emperor, one of the persecutors in the primitive times, that being environed and compassed about by his enemies, whereby he and all his army in the field were like to be lost for water, he commanded the christians of his army to pray for rain; whereby present re-

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lief came to him, his army was preserved, and his enemies destroyed; whereupon he wrote a letter to the Roman senate in favour of the christians, and gave this commendation of them in it. That they were a people which were, *Deo contenti*, content with God, *quem circumferunt secum in pectore*, whom they did always carry about with them in their bosom: yea, saith he, in that same letter, it is very credible, that although we think them wicked men, *Deum pro munimento habere in conscientia*, that they have God in their conscience for their bulwark.* Thus a heathen, thus an enemy, thus he who was once a persecutor confessed, and shall not we say as much?

Oh but, say some, *tolle meum et tolle Deum*, take away that word *my*, and take away the comfort of that word *God;* no God to me unless he be my God, and there are many of God's people that cannot say, God is my God, for they do want assurance; and therefore how can they have comfort in this?

Yes, if my very resting on God doth make him mine, I may have comfort in him too; now the saints and people of God may always, and do rest on God, and though Satan saith by way of temptation, You have not believed, you have not rested on God; yet they may say, Oh, but now I do rest on God, and so may always have comfort in their propriety and interest in God.

God doth always know them and their conditions. "I know thy works, and thy tribulation, and thy poverty," saith Christ to the church of Smyrna, Rev. ii. 9, 10: and this Christ speaks as a relieving comfort to that church in a sad condition; for saith Christ, "Satan shall cast some of you into prison ten days." Yet be of good comfort, Smyrna; I know thee and thy tribulation and poverty; whatever thy condition be, I do know thee in it: and it seems this is a general cordial, for it is given unto all the churches; I know thy works O Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia: it is spoken as a terror, indeed, to Laodicea, for that which is most comfortable to the good is most

* Δια τον Θεον ον φερουσι κατα συνειδησιν ιεκος ουν εστιν ους υ πολαμβανομεν α Θεους ειναι Θεον εχουσι αυτο ματον εν συνειδησει τετειχισμενον.—Justin Mart. 2 Apol.

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terrible to the wicked, as the presence of God, the omniscience of God, &c. But to the godly this is a great comfort; whatever my condition be, yet God my Father knows it, and doth know me in it.

God would not have his people be discouraged, and if God their Father and Jesus Christ their Saviour would not have them discouraged, then there is no true reason for their discouragements: now God and Christ would not have his people to be cast down or disquieted whatever their condition be. "Let not your heart be troubled," saith our Saviour to his disciples, John xiv. 1. As if he should say, I am now to die, to leave you all, to go to my Father; and when I am gone, you will meet with many troubles, but I would not have you discouraged, let not your heart be troubled. But now if thou diest, we shall then lose thy presence, and what greater trouble or affliction can there be than the loss of thy presence? Well, saith Christ, yet I would not have you troubled at heart; let not your heart be troubled. But if we lose thee, O Lord, we shall lose all the ordinances, and those many sweet opportunities of receiving good for our souls which we have enjoyed by thy presence. Be it so, saith our Saviour, yet I would not have you troubled at the heart; let not your heart be troubled. But, Lord, if we lose thee we shall be as sheep scattered, some will deny thee, all will forsake thee; and when the Shepherd is smitten, we, as sheep, shall be all dispersed, and fall into sad temptations, afflictions and desertions. Well, saith he, however it be, yet I would not have you troubled at the heart, let not your heart be troubled however, this is Christ's mind, will and pleasure concerning his disciples.

And if you say, How may it appear that God the Father would have his people to be of the same mind and disposition never to be discouraged? It appears plainly, because God hath provided promises of comfort, succour and relief, suitable to all conditions: I dare boldly challenge all men, to shew me any one condition, which God hath not provided a promise of comfort, mercy and succour suitable unto it.

Yea, and if you look upon the promises, and mark them well, you shall find they are so laid, worded and moulded, as that all discouraging objections may be fully answered,

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and taken off as they rise. For example, suppose the Church of God be under persecution of enemies, Isa. liv. 17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But you will say, Our enemies, O Lord, are many, they rise up against us, and gather into bodies, and confederate against thy servants; verse 15, he takes off that thus, "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me, whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake." But, O Lord, they have gotten instruments of death, and the whole power of the militia and ammunition into their hands. Be it so, saith the Lord, verse 16, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work, and I have created the waster to destroy: no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." But, O Lord, they have got authority on their side, and they rise against us in judgment: mark then what follows, verse 17, "And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." But this is a promise made unto the Jewish Church only, and not to us. Not so, "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord," verse 17. So that if you be the servants of the Lord, this promise tells you that it is made to you. But we are in an unbelieving condition, and are not able to lay hold on this promise. Well, but saith this promise, "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord:" children shall have their inheritance, though for the present they are not able to sue for it, it falls upon them in course. Oh, but we may sin against the Lord, and cut ourselves off from this promise and this inheritance: mark then what follows, "And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord," not only this promise is of me, but the righteousness, whereby they shall believe, and lay hold on it, and walk under it, is of me, saith the Lord. Oh, how graciously is this promise laid, whereby all unbelieving objections may be taken off! so it is in all the promises; do but observe and mark them, they are so moulded, ordered, worded, as that every word of the promise doth hold forth a distinct answer unto your objections. Now if God have so laid his promises, that all unbelieving objections may be taken off as they rise, what doth this argue, but that God

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our Father would not have his people discouraged, whatever their condition be? therefore they have no reason for it.

There is no matter of discouragement, which the saints do, or can meet withal, but there is a greater encouragement bound up therewith, or comes along with it: God doth never more graciously appear to his people, than when there is the greatest matter for their discouragement. John lay some years in the bosom of Jesus Christ, whilst Christ lived, but, then he had not the revelation given him; Christ dies, John is afflicted, persecuted, driven into the isle of Patmos, there an exile, and there Christ appears to him, and gives him that blessed book of comfort, the book of the revelation. We read of Jacob, that at one time especially he did so see the Lord, that he called the name of the place, Peniel, "for I have seen the Lord," Gen. xxxii. 30, saith he, and when was that, but when churlish Laban was on one side of him, and his rough brother Esau coming out against him in an hostile way on the other side? Once he had a vision of a ladder, the top whereof was in heaven, and the foot on earth, angels ascending and descending upon it; which in John i. Christ interprets to be himself. "You shall see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man;" but when had he this vision? not all the while he was in his father's house, but when he was fain to fly from the anger of his brother, lay in the open field in the night, and had no pillow but an hard stone to lie upon, then doth Christ thus appear to him, and make such a discovery and manifestation of himself, as he never had before. And when was it that Mr. Robert Glover was so filled with heavenly joys, that he cried out, He is come, he is come? Ye read of him in the Book of Martyrs, that for five years together, he was worn out and consumed with fears and troubles; he could neither eat nor sleep, he was so afflicted in his soul upon the apprehension of some backsliding, he thought he must needs be thrown down to hell when he died, yea, he thought, saith the story of him, that he could not more despair in hell, yet after this long time of wrestling with this temptation, it pleased God to come in with comforts: but I say, when was this? why, then especially, when he came within sight of the stake, then he cried out with clapping of his hands, He is come, he is come. Thus doth God, with

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whom are reserves of mercies, reserve his sweetest consolations, for the time of our sourest afflictions, and doth temper the one with the other in most fit proportion.

Yea, the Lord doth not only give forth encouragement in time of discouragement, and proportion his encouragements unto our discouragements, but he doth make your discouragements, occasional rises and bottoms, unto your encouragements and comforts. The Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, and then he took a rib from his side, wherewith he made a help for him; so doth God cause a deep sleep to come upon you in your discouragements, out of which he takes a rib, and builds up a help for you, making the discouragements of the saints, to contribute to their very encouragements. "Behold, saith the Lord, I will allure her (that is the church, his people) and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her, and I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope," Hosea ii. 14. But a wildernessed condition is a lost condition, and what comfort can one have in a lost condition? True, saith God, ye cannot, in and by yourselves, but there I will speak friendly and comfortably to her, and of all the times that I choose to preach gospel to a poor soul, I choose to do it in a wildernessed and lost condition. But though the Lord do speak comfortably to us, if we be in a wilderness, a dry and barren place where no food, nor comfort is, how can we be but discouraged? Nay, saith the Lord, but "I will give her her vineyards from thence:" but if we sin and murmur in the wilderness, as the Israelites did, the Lord will cut us off as he did them, and a wilderness is a place of trouble, wherein we are apt to murmur, and be discouraged: nay, saith the Lord, "But I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope." The valley of Achor, was the valley of perturbation, trouble, and of great discouragement, when the men of Israel fled, and fell before the men of Ai, for the sin of Achan, Joshua vii. 26; yet it was an inlet to the land of Canaan, to the land of rest. Now, saith the Lord, look as it was with them though the valley of Achor was a valley of trouble and perturbation, yet it was the door by which the Israelites came into the land of rest: so shall it be with you, I will make your troubles and discou-

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ragements, the very door of your hope; the valley of your discouragements shall be the door, and an inlet unto all your rest and comfort. God takes the same way with the members, as he went with the head; Christ's cross was an inlet of glory, his suffering time was the valley of Achor to his disciples, and was it not a door of hope unto them, and unto all the saints? This is God's way; discouragements bring encouragements; and the more discouragements the saints have, the more encouragements they shall have; yea, their discouragements shall contribute to their encouragements, and be a door of hope to them. Now if the valley of Achor shall by promise be a door of hope, why should we be discouraged whatsoever the valley of Achor be, whatever our condition be?

A praying man can never be very miserable, whatever his condition be, for he hath the ear of God; the Spirit within to indite, a friend in heaven to present, and God himself to receive his desires as a Father; it is a mercy to pray, though I never have the mercy prayed for; thereby God doth come down to us, and we go up to God. It is the soul's converse with God on earth, and a great ease to a burdened, troubled spirit; for thereby he may go and empty all his heart into the bosom of his best friend. Now every godly gracious man, is a praying man, more or less he prayeth; it is spoken as an argument of Paul's conversion, "Behold he prayeth;" as speech is common unto all men, so prayer unto all christians; God hath none of his children born dumb; as soon as one of your children is born, it cries, and it sucks, and it sleeps: so with every man that is born of God, as soon as he is born, he cries unto God in prayer, he sucks the breast of the promise, and he sleeps in the bosom of God by divine contentment, being dead unto all the world; it may be he cannot pray as he would, but though he cannot pray as he would, nor hear as he would, nor perform any duty as he would, yet he prayeth. It may be said of him, "Behold he prayeth:" turn him where you will, and behold he prayeth: sick, yet behold he prayeth; tempted, yet behold he prayeth; at home or abroad, yet behold he prayeth; and can he be miserable while he prayeth? Surely no, why then should he be discouraged, whatever his condition be?

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If the matter of the saints' discouragements, be but a cloud that will blow over and melt away, then no reason for their discouragements, whatsoever their condition be. Now thus it is with the people of God, though they be in a dark, and very dark condition, yet their darkness is but the darkness of a cloud, and as he said, *Nubecula est, cito transibit;* it is but a cloud, it will soon over. So may they say concerning every matter of their discouragement; It is dark indeed, but this darkness will over; there is a storm comes down upon us, but we shall see land again, the shore again; it is but a cloud, but a cloud. And upon this account David comforted his own heart here, and checked his soul for his immoderate dejection: "Why art thou cast down," &c. "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him." I shall be delivered, this cloud will over, it will not last, it is but the darkness of a cloud.

But how shall it appear that it is but a cloud, and the darkness of a cloud? I think it is night, and dark night with my soul, yea, such a night as shall never know morning. Indeed if I did know that the matter of my discouragement were but a cloudy darkness, then I would conclude and say, There is no reason for this discouragement: but how shall I know whether this darkness be the darkness of a cloud, or of the night?

If the darkness be such as comes immediately after the rising and shining forth of the promise, then it is but the darkness of a cloud, not of the night: the sun doth not rise to set immediately; and therefore if darkness comes immediately after sun-rising, it is certainly the darkness of an eclipse, or of a cloud, not of the night. There was a fair promise rose and shined upon Joseph, when the Lord said, "that his sheaf should be higher than all the sheaves of his brethren:" yet presently after that there arose a darkness upon him, but it was the darkness of a cloud, and not of the night; why so? because he had a promise first, which did shine upon him. So David had a fair promise of the kingdom, when he was anointed by Samuel; yet a darkness presently rose upon him, but it was the darkness of a cloud only, and not of the night; why? because it was such a darkness as arose immediately after the shinings forth of a promise. And I pray you shew me any Scripture, where you find that

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ever any darkness arose presently after the breaking, shining forth of a promise, which was more than the darkness of a cloud, which vanished away? Or where do you find in all the Scripture, that ever any poor soul came into the dark, immediately after the giving out of a promise, but that soul did come to the light again? Now as for the darkness that covers the saints, it is usually a darkness that comes after the giving and shining out of a promise; and therefore that darkness is but the darkness of a cloud, and they may say, a cloud, a cloud, and it will pass away.

If a man be so in the dark, as yet he can see to work, and dig up pits, it argues that the darkness is but the darkness of a cloud. A man cannot see to work artificially in the night, but though there be much darkness by reason of a cloud, yet he may see to work, and to dig up pits, because it is day. Now in Psalm lxxxiv. the Psalmist saith, at verse 5, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, and in whose heart are the ways of them; who passing through the valley of Baca, dig up pits, the rain also filleth the pits, they go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion." It is an allusion to the practice of the Jews: when some of them went up to Jerusalem, their way lay through the valley of Baca, which was a very dry valley, where no houses were, where no water was for their relief and refreshment; whereupon they digged up pits, and so the rain fell, and they were refreshed, got strength, and went on to Jerusalem, where they saw the Lord in his ordinances. So saith the Psalmist, "Blessed are they in whose heart the law of God is." There are a generation of men in the world, that have the law of God in their hearts, though they cannot act and work towards God as they would: these sometimes are in a dry and barren condition, where no water or comfort is; yet if in this condition they dig up pits, go to prayer, wait upon God in duty, though they find no comfort springing up in their duty for the present, yet in due time the rain of God's blessing will fill those dry pits and empty duties, whereby their life shall be like unto a pool of water, and they shall go from strength of grace to strength of grace, until they see the Lord. Know ye, therefore, any man that is in this valley of Baca, where no water is, yet if he can find in his heart to dig up pits, to pray, read, hear, meditate,

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confer, and perform duties; though those duties be empty of comfort for the present, yet the rain of grace and mercy shall fall upon those pits, and he shall go from strength to strength, until he appear before the Lord in glory. Now thus it is with the saints, though darkness, and a great darkness be upon them, yet in that dark condition they are still digging up pits, and therefore this darkness is not the darkness of the night, but the darkness of a cloud, and they may say, This is a cloudy darkness, and it will over ere long.

If the darkness which a man is under be such, as there are some openings of light withal, then it is the darkness of a cloud, and not of the night; though the cloud may cause much darkness, yet ever and anon it opens, and there are some interims of light withal; but the night opens not, there are no interims of light then. Now interims and intermissions of light, are sure and certain pledges of a greater light which is yet to come. You know that when David fled from Absalom, he was in a dark condition, for the text saith, "He went, and he wept," and he went barefoot; his own son persecutes him, drives him from his throne, a great confederacy was raised against him by wicked men, with the child of his own bowels; here was darkness upon darkness, matter of great discouragement, but it was a cloud, and no more.

You will say, How should David have known that it was but the darkness of a cloud?

David prayed, the Lord turn the counsels of Ahithophel into folly; and before David had overcome Absalom, and was restored to his kingdom, Ahithophel did hang himself: David singled out Ahithophel to pray against, and the Lord heard his prayer: that judgment of Ahithophel was the return of David's prayer; here the cloud opened, and this answer of his prayer in the interim, was a seal to David of the full deliverance that came afterwards, for God seals divers matters with the same seal.* So when a man is in the dark by reason of some temptatiom, affliction, or desertion, which he cannot see the end of: if in this interim, before the full deliverance comes, he hath some lesser deliverance, that lesser deliverance in the interim, is a seal unto him of the future deliverance, and he may say, here is a pledge of my

* Deus uno sigillo sigillat diversas materias.

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full deliverance, for here is the opening of the cloud. Now thus it is always with the people of God; they never are in any affliction, temptation, or desertion, but before their great deliverance comes, they have some special providence, some reviving in the midst of their trouble, some interim of light, some openings of the cloud; and therefore in the midst of all they may say, surely this my darkness, is not the darkness of a night, but of cloud; I say, there is no discouragement doth befal the saints, but the matter thereof is a cloud, and they may say, it is but a cloud, it will pass over, and therefore why should they be discouraged? Surely there is no reason for their discouragements whatever their conditions be.

If these things be so, how heavily doth this doctrine fall in reproof upon some, I wish I might not say, some of the servants and people of God! A godly man hath no true reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition is, although it be never so sad; and some are always discouraged, whatever their condition be, although it be never so good; whatever falls out, the saints should not be discouraged, no, not at any thing, and yet many are discouraged at every thing and upon every occasion. Oh, what unworthy walking is this! how contrary do you walk to God! And do you know what it is to walk contrary to him? Hath he not said, "If you walk contrary to me, I will walk contrary to you?"

But I have reason to be discouraged, for I have no sense and feeling of God's love.

We do not live by feeling, but by faith: it is the duty of a christian to begin with faith, and so to rise up to feeling: you would begin with feeling, and so come down to faith; but you must begin with faith, and so rise up to feeling. And I pray tell me, is it not sufficient to be as our Master was? Did not Christ want the sense of God's love, when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yea, had not Christ the sense of God's anger upon him when he did perform the greatest act of obedience that ever the sun saw: yet did he then say, I am not the child of God, because I want the sense of God's love, because I am under the sense of God's anger? No, but with the same breath that he said he was forsaken, he said, "My God,

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my God;" and at the same time he called God Father, "Father, forgive them," &c. So may you do; though God hath forsaken you, though you want the sense of his love, yea, and are under the sense of God's anger; yet at the same time you may say, The Lord is my Father, and you may go to him as your Father: and if you can say, God is my Father, have you any reason for your discouragements? Yet how often are God's own people discouraged and cast down? Oh, you that are the disciples of Christ, labour more and more to follow your Master; and as David here, so do you often say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

What a mighty, vast difference, is there between a godly man and a wicked upon this account: a godly, gracious man, hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition be; a wicked man hath no reason for his encouragement, whatever his condition be. A gracious man is apt to be much discouraged, but he hath no true reason for it: a wicked man is apt to be much encouraged, but he hath no true reason for it. It is said of the wicked, Psalm vii., "God is angry with the wicked every day:" whatever the day be, God is angry with them; though it be a day of fasting and prayer, yet then is God angry with them; though it be a day of praises and of thanksgiving, then is God angry with them; when he sins most, and when he sins least, God is angry with him; not one day goes over his head, but God is angry with him, and one blow or another God's anger reacheth forth to him every day; he doth not always feel those blows, but God is smiting of him, and is angry with him every day; and therefore, whatever his condition be, there is no reason for his encouragement. Suppose a man were in prison, committed for some great offence, and condemned to die under the displeasure of his prince or state; and his servant should come unto him, saying, Sir, be of good comfort, your wife is well at home, you have very sweet children, an excellent crop of corn, your neighbours love you dearly, your sheep and cattle thrive, and all your houses are in good repair and order: would he not answer that servant, and say, What is all this, so long as I am condemned to die? Thus it is with every wicked man, he is under the displeasure of the great God, a condemned man,

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and God is angry with him every day; and if his heart were open to be sensible of it, he would say, You tell me of my friends and goods and name and trade; but what is all this, so long as I am a condemned person, and God is angry with me every day I rise? but for the present he feeleth not his displeasure, is not sensible of it; yet let him know that there is a day coming, when he will find the truth of this matter no reason for his encouragement, whatever his condition be. And as Saul once cried out, saying, "God hath forsaken me, and the Philistines are upon me;" so shall he cry out and say, God hath forsaken my soul, temptations are now upon me, my sins and guilt are upon me, God hath forsaken me, and the devils are now upon me. But now, as for a godly, gracious man, though his condition be never so sad, and his soul never so much cast down, yet he hath no reason to be discouraged, I say, whatever his condition be. What a glorious condition are the saints in, who would not be in love with this condition; who would not be in Christ; who would not leave the ways of the wicked; who would not be godly? Oh, you that are ungodly, labour to become godly.

The exhortation is specially directed to the saints, and with you I must leave a word of exhortation. Take heed and beware of discouragements, of being cast down, you have no reason for it, much reason against it.

Thereby you rejoice the heart of Satan, he claps his hands and laughs to see you cast down, now, oh now, saith he, this man is like to me, I am a despairing spirit, and so is he; I am discouraged and cast down, and so is he; he stands triumphing over you, to see you under these discouragements: when you are sad, he is glad.

And as you rejoice the heart of Satan, so you grieve the heart of God; one friend is grieved at the grief, sorrow and discouragement of another, and the more real friendship, the greater is the affliction and trouble of the one, if the other be grieved. Now God is the friend of the faithful, Abraham, the friend of God, actively, passively: God was a friend to him, and he a friend to God; so with all believers; Christ is their friend, "Henceforth call I you no more servants, but friends," saith Christ; and the Holy Ghost is their friend, for it is the Spirit that comes and

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dwells in them, and manifests himself to them: and we are said to grieve the Spirit. As God is the worst enemy, so he is the best friend, the truest friend, the most real friend in all the world, therefore when you are cast down and discouraged, you grieve him, you grieve the Father, you grieve the Son, you grieve the Spirit; and do you know what you do when you grieve the Lord? Is it nothing to grieve such a friend?

Thereby you do in some measure, yea, in a great measure, make void and frustrate the end of Christ's coming, who came not only to free us from hell, but from our present fears, "That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve him without fear," Luke i. And will you then go drooping, discouraged, bowed down under your fears all your days?

Thereby you unfit yourselves for the service of Christ; the passover of old was not to be eaten with any old leaven, the old leaven was to be purged out, and none that were sad and sorrowful were to eat of the holy things. Now, saith the apostle, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast," that is, the gospel feast, "not with old leaven;" and will no bread down with you but leavened bread; sour bread; the bread of mourning? will you thus keep your passover, your christian feast? Some of you have been doubting, fearing, trembling, cast down, discouraged many years: and is it not yet time to bewail your unbelief; to honour free grace? what, will ye always grieve the Spirit, the Father and Christ; always be frustrating of Christ's work? will ye always be eating old leaven? is it not yet time to say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in him, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

I know indeed that I have no just and scripture reason for my discouragements, but I see there is much reason against it, yet I am one of a troubled spirit, I would fain have it otherwise, that at last I might glorify free grace; what should I do that I may bear up against all discouragements, that I may not be discouraged, whatever my condition be?

The only way which the Psalmist useth here is, to hope,

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trust, believe in God; and how we should use our faith in Christ as that we may not be discouraged, follows after, for the present, take these directions:

1. If we would not be discouraged in any condition, then never lay your comforts upon your condition, nor be in love with any condition for itself; let not your condition itself be the cause or bottom of your encouragements. Hang a cloak or garment upon a rotten peg, and that will break, and the garment will fall down; now there is no condition but is a rotten peg, every condition is alterable, no condition so firm and fast, but is exposed to many changes, it is a rotten hold; God is pillars, his name is Adonai, which signifies so much, and in Isa. xxvi., we are commanded to trust in the Lord, "For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength," or "the Rock of Ages." And, saith the Psalmist, "My flesh faileth, and my heart faileth, but God is the Rock of my heart for ever," so the Hebrew.* Lay your comforts upon your own condition, and you do but build on the sand, which will be carried away with every wind, and storm, and tempest; but if upon Christ himself, upon God himself, ye build upon the Rock, and though the floods, and storms, and winds do rise and beat upon you, yet you shall not lose your comforts, because they are built upon a rock.

2. Be sure that you think of Christ in a right way and manner, as he suiteth with your condition, and as he is held forth in the gospel. We are very apt to have mis-thoughts of Christ; as Satan doth transform himself into an angel of light, so he would transform Christ before you into an angel of darkness: but the Scriptures hold him forth under such relations as do make him very amiable unto poor sinners. Are you accused by Satan, world, or your own conscience? he is called your Advocate. Are you ignorant? he is called the Prophet. Are you guilty of sin? he is called a Priest, and High Priest. Are you afflicted with many enemies, inward and outward? he is called a King, and King of kings. Are you in straits? he is called your way. Are you hungry or thirsty? he is called Bread and Water of Life. Are you afraid you shall fall away, and be condemned at the last? he

* צור-לבבי Psalm lxxiii. 26.

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is our second Adam, a public person, in whose death we died, and in whose satisfaction we satisfied; as there is no temptation or affliction, but some promise or other doth especially suit therewithal: so there is no condition, but some name, some title, some attribute of Christ doth especially suit with it: and as you do not look on Christ, but in reference to your condition, so you are not to look upon your condition alone, but with Christ's attribute suitable thereunto; if you look upon Christ's attribute of love without your condition, you may presume; if on your condition without Christ's attribute of love, you may despair: think on both together and you will not be discouraged.*

3. If your discouragements begin to arise and press in upon you, check yourself, and say, Why should I multiply thoughts without knowledge; why should I tire out my soul with these thoughts; am I able to add one cubit to my spiritual state; am I, by all my thoughtfulness, able to alter my condition; yea, doth not my thoughtfulness set me at a farther distance from the mercy desired? The truth is, the only way to lose the comfort desired, is to be solicitous about it; as the only way to have an outward blessing is to be content to go without it: so the only way to have a spiritual or outward affliction removed, is to be contented that it should be continued, if God and Christ will have it so. But you will have your affliction presently removed, and you must presently know that you are in the state of grace, and the child of God, or else you will be discouraged, and as the bird in the net, the more it strives, the more it is entangled; so with you also. Wherefore do temptations, afflictions, desertions come, and Satan join with them, and say unto thy soul, This will ever be? answer, Well, but I therefore believe the contrary, because thou sayest so, Satan, who art a liar; yet if God will have it so, I am contented, I leave it to him: whether I shall ever be in this condition or not, is not my question, but now, O Lord, let me serve thee, that is all my desire, let me see thee as thou pleasest, when thou pleasest.

* Christus titulos sibi sumit, qui presenti rerum conditioni conveniant unde varium suæ gloriæ radium in singulis epistolis ad ecclesias spargit, pro varia fortuna, qua sunt ecclesiæ; quo docet, illud immensæ, divinæ majestatis imprimis esse mente contemplandum; quod in rem presentem maxime conducat.—Brightman in Apocalyps., cap. ii. p. 43.

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I have done, Lord, I have done; I have been questioning and questioning my condition these many years, I see there is no end of that, yea, the more I do, the more I may, I get nothing by it; why, therefore, oh, my soul, should I tear out myself with this kind of thoughtfulness? thus check yourselves.

4. Whenever you think of any thing which is in itself tertible, or matter of discouragement, be sure that you mingle the consideration thereof, with those sweet things which God hath given and prescribed to you. There is nothing terrible, but God hath joined some comfortable thing with it: the name of God is terrible, he is called the great and dreadful God; but to sweeten this, he is called the God of all consolations: death is terrible, it is called the king of terrors; but to sweeten this, it is called a sleep: the day of judgment is terrible; but to sweeten that, our present Advocate shall be our future Judge; yea, our best Friend, and our dear Husband. Now if you abstract the terror of any object from the sweetness of it, no wonder if you be much discouraged. It is our duty to behold things as God presents them, and to take things as God doth give them. What God hath joined together, no man may put asunder. If you consider the sweetness of an object or condition, without the sourness of it, then you may grow too wanton: if you consider the terror of an object or condition, without the sweetness of it, then you may be too fearful: but if you think on both together, then you will fear and believe; and believe and fear, and so be kept from discouragement.

5. If you would not be discouraged whatever your condition be, labour more and more to get your self-love mortified, even religious self-love: all your discouragements are from self-love, not from the venom of your condition, but from the poison of self-love. Oh but I am discouraged, because I have no assurance. Well, but suppose you had assurance, what then? then I should have comfort: and is not here self? Oh but I am discouraged about my everlasting condition. And is not that self? doth not that word *condition* sound ones self? I dare boldly say, there is no tumult or immoderate discouragement in the soul, but hath self at the bottom. Could I leave myself, and my condition with God and Christ, and mind his service, glory and honour

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more, God would take care of my comfort: but when I mind myself, and my condition so much, and his service, glory and honour so little, no wonder that I am so much discouraged. Therefore, labour more and more to mortify self-love, and so shall you never be discouraged, whatever your condition be.

6. In case that temptation press in upon you, and urge you to sad discouragements, speak to this purpose unto your own soul. Why should I buy my repentance at so dear a rate? There is none of all these doubtings, unbelieving fears and discouragements, but you will be ashamed and repent of afterwards. You know how it is with the traveller, he thinks the sun is not yet up, and so he loiters and sits down; but the sun creeping up behind the cloud, at last breaks out upon his face, and is got before him, and then he says, O what a fool was I, to think the sun was not up, because I saw it not, what an unwise man was I thus to loiter and sit down! So it will be with you: you now lie down upon the earth, and your belly cleaves to the dust by reason of your discouragements; but the grace of God and the love of Christ, is creeping up behind the dark cloud, and it will break out at the last upon you, and shine into your face with the golden beams of mercy; it will prevent you, and be before you; and then you will say, Oh, what a fool was I to be thus discouraged, what an unworthy creature I, to doubt thus of God's love; I have sinned, I have sinned by all my unbelief: now the Lord pardon me all my doubtings, I am, O Lord, ashamed of these my doubtings and questionings of thy love, pardon them, O Lord, unto my soul. This is that which you must come to, you must at last be ashamed and repent of these your unbeliefs, doubtings and fears, and therefore whenever they press in upon thee, say at the first unto thyself, Why should I buy my repentance at so dear a rate, by yielding unto these discouragements? And for this very reason, because that discouragements are to be repented of, therefore the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged, whatever their condition be.

And thus have I spoken to this truth under a more general consideration; through grace I shall labour to clear it further to you by particulars.

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SERMON IV.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF GREAT SINS.

"*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c*".—Psalm xlii. 11.

THE doctrine or observation that now we are pressing from these words, is this:

That the saints and people of God, have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be; no just, true, scripture reason, for their discouragements, whatever their condition be.

It is clear by the words, and proved the last day by some general considerations.

Now more particularly, to make it out by divers instances. Nine things there are, which usually are the grounds and occasions of the discouragements of God's people.

I. Sometimes their discouragements are drawn from their greater and grosser sins.

II. Sometimes they do arise from the weakness of grace.

III. Sometimes they are taken from their failing in and non-acceptance of duty.

IV. Sometimes they are drawn from their want of evidence for heaven, and non-assurance of the love of God.

V. Sometimes they do come from their temptations.

VI. Sometimes from their desertions.

VII. Sometimes from their afflictions.

VIII. Sometimes from their unserviceableness.

IX. Sometimes from their condition itself.

Now if in all these respects, the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged, then we may safely conclude, that a godly man should not be discouraged whatever his condition be. I shall labour, therefore, through the grace of Christ, to make out this great truth unto you in all these respects, and begin with the first at this time.

I. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints and people of God, are drawn from their sins, their greater and grosser sins: the peace and quiet of the saints and people of God is many times interrupted by their sins.

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Oh, says one, I am a man or woman of a rebellious heart, I have so slight a spirit, so unholy and uneven a conversation, that when I reflect upon my heart and life, I cannot but be discouraged. I know, indeed, it is a great evil for a man to labour under a sore temptation, or a sad desertion; but were my heart good, my life good, my conversation good, I should not be discouraged; but as for me, I have committed and do commit such and such great sins, have I not reason, and just reason now to be discouraged?

No, for discouragement itself is a sin, another sin, a gospel sin; now my sin against the law, is no just cause why I should sin against the gospel. I confess, indeed, there is much evil in every sin, the least sin is worse than the greatest affliction; afflictions, judgments and punishments are but the claws of this lion; it is more contrary to God than the misery of hell: Chrysostom had so great a sense of the evil of it, that when the empress sent him a threatening message, Go, tell her, said he, *Nil nisi peccatum metuo:* I fear nothing but sin. And, in some respects, the sins of the godly are worse than the sins of others, for they grieve the Spirit more, they dishonour Christ more, they grieve the saints more, they wound the name of God more, they are more against the love, and grace, and favour of God than other men's sins are. And the Lord doth see the sins of his own people; yea, so far he sees sin in them, that he doth chastise and afflict them for it; not only *from* their sin, but *for* their sin; and therefore, saith the apostle, in 1 Cor. xi. 30, speaking of the unworthy receiving of the Lord's supper, "For this cause many are sick and weak among you." And he doth not speak only of saints in appearance, and in church estate, but of such also as were saints indeed, and therefore he saith, "We are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." He puts himself in; We are judged that we may not be condemned with the world. Our Saviour Christ saith, Rev. iii. 19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent."* It seems, then, it was for sin committed, else why should he say, Repent; and, repent therefore? Repentance is for sin committed already, and these were such as he loved too, whom

* Οσους δε φιλω ελεγχω παιδευω ζηλωσον ουν και μετανοησον.

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he threatens thus to rebuke and chastise; and doth any father rebuke, chastise, or correct his child only *from* sin, and not *for* sin? Was not Moses a gracious and a holy man? and yet for his unbelief and sin he lost the land of Canaan. Was not Samson a good man? and yet by his sin he lost his eyes and his life too. Was not David a gracious and a holy man? and yet for his sin the Lord said, "The sword should never depart from his house;" and yet Christ had made satisfaction for his sin too, as well then, as for the saints now. But now, though there be never so much evil in the sins of God's people, yet they have no reason, no just cause or scripture reason to be cast down, and to be discouraged in that respect.

But how may this appear; that notwithstanding the sins of God's own people do grieve the Spirit of God, are a dishonour to Jesus Christ, and do wound the name of God, and the profession of Christ so much; that yet the saints have no reason to be discouraged or cast down?

1. They know, or they may know, that they shall never be condemned for their sin, whatever it be. "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus," saith the apostle. Christ was made sin for them; and if Christ be made sin for me, then my sin shall never hurt me. Luther is bold here, for saith he, Christ is made sin-damning, our sin is sin-damned: I confess, indeed, said he, that I have sinned, but sin-damning is stronger than sin-damned, and Christ was made sin-damning for me.* The thing is true, though the expression be strange; Christ was made sin for saints, therefore their sin shall not hurt them. It stands not with the justice of God to exact the payment of one debt twice. Now the Lord Jesus Christ hath not only been arrested, but in gaol for the debt of the saints and people of God, and he hath paid it to the utmost farthing; he hath paid it better than they could have paid it themselves, if they had gone to hell: for if a godly man had gone to hell, and been damned for ever, he would have been always paying, but the debt would never have been paid: Christ paid it all down for the present. And if you look into Scripture, you will find, that

* Fateor me peccasse, sed peccatum meum damnatum in Christo est, qui est peccatum damnans; est autem peccatum illud damnans, fortius peccato damnato.—Luther.

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the Lord doth not condemn a man, no not a wicked man, barely for the act of his former sin, but because he will not turn from it. Psalm vii. 11, "The Lord is angry with the wicked every day:" verse 12, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath prepared for him the instruments of death, he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutor." The Lord hath prepared instruments of death against every wicked man; but yet, notwithstanding, though a man be never so wicked, if he turn unto the Lord, God will not discharge those instruments of death upon him, yea, though his sins have been never so great; but, saith the text, "If he turn not," (not because he hath sinned before, only, but because he turns not from his sin,) "he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." Now there is, always, in the saints and people of God, a turning disposition, although they do sin against God; there is always, I say, a turning disposition in them, and therefore the Lord will not discharge the instruments of death upon them: surely, then, they have no reason to be quite discouraged in this respect.

2. As godly men shall never be condemned for their sins, so their sins shall never part God and them. What is the seeming reason why some are so discouraged about their sins? but because they think they shall not only lose the face and presence of God by their sins, but that they shall lose God himself. But now, I say, the sins of the godly shall never part God and them; their sins may hide God's face: but as their sins did not hinder God and their coming together at first, so their sins shall never part God and them: their sins may cause a strangeness between God and them, but shall never cause an enmity; their sins may hide God's face from them, but shall never turn God's back upon them: those whom God loves, he loves unto the end: "I am the Lord that changeth not," saith he. And as the prophet Isaiah speaks: "As the covenant that the Lord made with Noah, such is the covenant that he makes with his people." Now look into Genesis, chapter viii., and you shall see what the covenant is that the Lord made there with Noah, and with the world by Noah. When Noah came out of the ark, he built an altar, and sacrificed; verse 21, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will

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not again curse the ground for man's sake." Why? "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." You would think this were a reason why God should curse the ground again; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; man is wicked, therefore, surely God will curse the ground again: nay, saith the Lord, but though you that are poor creatures think so, yet I, that am the God of all grace, I make this covenant with the world by Noah, that I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake; because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth continually. I confess, indeed, the Hebrew כי signifies *quamvis*, although; as well as *quoniam*, because: and it may be so translated; "Although the imagination of man's heart is evil," &c. Yet the Chaldee paraphrase, Septuagint, Hierom and Montanus render it, because.* But though it be so translated, yet that is enough to make good the truth and doctrine which I urge from this scripture. The covenant that the Lord makes with his people, is such a covenant as the Lord made with Noah; so saith the prophet Isaiah. What then? Therefore if God be in covenant with a man, he shall never lie under wrath again; for though the world sin, the world shall never be drowned again; and so, though he do sin, he shall never lie under wrath again. Now as for the people of God, they are all in covenant with God, they are under this gracious covenant, and therefore, though the mountains may be removed, God's mercy shall never be removed from them; and though the great hills may be thrown into the sea, the people of God, once in covenant with God, shall never be thrown into hell: and tell me then, have you, that are the people of God, any just cause or reason to be cast down, or to be discouraged?

3. If the very sins of God's people, through the overruling hand of grace, shall be an occasion of more grace and comfort to them than ever they had in all their lives before; then surely they have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now mark it, and you shall find, that God doth never suffer his people to fall into any sin, but he intends to make that

* Sensus enim et cogitatio humani cordis, &c.—Hierom.
Οτι ἐγκεῖται η διανοια.—Sept.
Quia cogitatio.—Montanus.
כארי ליבא יצרא.—Chaldee Paraphrase.

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sin an inlet unto further grace and comfort to them. This ye see in the first great sin that ever was committed by the children of men, the fall of Adam, the Lord himself came and preached the gospel, preached Christ unto fallen man; and surely when God himself preached the gospel, we are to think the man was converted. Now the greatest blessing that ever the world saw, was the righteousness of Jesus Christ; but how came that about? God suffers man to fall, and man's unrighteousness must usher in Christ's righteousness. The Scripture tells us that the Lord suffered Hezekiah to fall, that Hezekiah might know all that was in his heart; he did not know his own heart before, and therefore the Lord let him fall that he might know his own heart. But if you look into the Romans, chapter xi., you shall find in so many words what I am now speaking; verse 32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief." Why? "That he might have mercy upon all." Oh, what a blessed design upon unbelief is here! Therefore God concludes all under unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all: sin gets not, but is a loser by every fall of the godly. And if ye look into the Scripture, ye shall observe, that when the people of God fall, usually they fail in that grace wherein they do most excel; and wherein they did most excel, therein they did most miscarry. Abraham did most excel in faith, and therein he did most miscarry: Moses did most excel in meekness, and therein he did most miscarry; we read of no other sin concerning Moses but his anger: Job did most excel in patience, and therein he did most miscarry: Peter did most excel in zeal and resolution for Christ—"Though all the world forsake thee, yet will not I"—and therein he did most miscarry, denying Christ at the voice of a damsel. I say, ye shall observe this, that the saints fell and failed in that grace wherein they did most excel; and they did most excel wherein they did most miscarry: what is the reason of this? but because the Lord, by the over-ruling hand of his grace, did make their very miscarriages, inlets and occasions to their further grace and holiness. God hath a great revenue from the very infirmities of his people. He doth never suffer any of his people to fall into any sin, but he hath a design by that fall, to break the back of that sin they do fall into. Now, then, have the saints and people of God any reason to be

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discouraged in this respect? By their sin they may be, and are oftentimes suspended from their comforts and use of their privileges; but by their sin they do not lose their right thereunto. Ye know how it was with the leper in the times of the Old Testament, among the Jews; when he was carried out of the city or town, from his own house, by reason of his uncleanness: or now, if a man that hath the plague, and be carried from his own house by reason thereof; the leper then, and the man that hath the plague or the pest now, may say, Though I be removed from mine own house, and have not the use of my house, yet I have a right to my house still; and though I cannot come to the use of my land, yet I have a right to my land still. So a godly man may say as concerning his sin, This sin of mine, indeed, it is a pest, and the plague of my soul, and a leprosy; but though, by this leprosy of mine, I am now suspended from the use of my comforts, yea, from the full use of my interest in Jesus Christ; yet, notwithstanding, I have an interest in Christ still, I have not lost my interest, still I have right to Christ; although I cannot come to the use of him as I did before, yet I have right unto Jesus Christ now, as I had before: and if all these things be so, why should a godly man be cast down or discouraged in this respect? Surely he ought not to be so.

But suppose a man's sins be such as never were pardoned before; and truly that is my case, for I have sinned a great sin, and I do not read in all the word of God, any example that ever such a sin as mine was pardoned; have I not reason now to be quite discouraged and cast down?

I answer, No; for, I pray, what do you think of Adam? Adam sinned a great sin in our first fall: the Lord himself came and preached the gospel to him, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." Should Adam have said, Oh, but there is no hope for me, for I have no example or precedent of pardon? Adam could have no example of any that was pardoned before him, because he was the first man, and the first that sinned. Should he have sat down and been discouraged, because he could not find any example for the pardon of the like sin that he had committed? You know what our Saviour Christ said, "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, unless it be the sin against the

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Holy Ghost;" every sin, though it be boiled up to blasphemy. You say, you have no example for the pardon of such a sin as your's is; but doth not your sin come within the compass of these words, "Every sin and blasphemy?" Surely it doth. Have ye any reason then to be discouraged under the power of this objection?

But suppose that a man have sinned greatly against his conscience, or against his light, against his knowledge, hath he not just cause or reason then to be cast down, and to be quite discouraged?

No; for if there be a sacrifice for such a sin as this is, then a man hath no reason to be quite discouraged; cause to be humbled, as you shall hear afterward, but no reason to be discouraged. Now in the times of the Old Testament, in times of the law among the Jews, there was a sacrifice, not only for sin committed ignorantly, but also for sin committed against light and against conscience: and I appeal to you, whoever you are that make this objection, do you not think that Peter, when he denied his Lord and Master, sinned against his conscience, against his light, and against his knowledge? Surely then there is no reason that a man should be quite discouraged, no not in this respect.

But suppose that a man's sins be exceeding great, gross, and heinous; for I do confess that possibly a godly man may sin some sin against his light, and against his conscience sometimes; but as for me, my sin is exceeding great, gross and heinous, and have I not just cause and reason now to be discouraged?

No, not yet, for though your sin be great, is not God's mercy great, exceeding great? is not the satisfaction of Christ great? are the merits of Christ's blood small? Is not God, the great God of heaven and earth, able to do great things? You grant that God is almighty in providing for you; and is he not almighty also in pardoning: will ye spoil God of his almightiness in pardoning? You say your sin is great, but is it infinite; is there any more infinites than one, and that is God? Is your sin as big as God, as big as Christ; is Jesus Christ only a Mediator for small sins; will you bring down the satisfaction of Christ, and the mercy of God, to your own model? Hath not the Lord said concerning pardoning mercy, that his "thoughts are not

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as our thoughts, but as the heavens are greater than the earth, so are his thoughts (in this respect) beyond our thoughts." Hath not the Lord said, in Isaiah xliii, unto the people of the Jews, at verse 22, " But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Verse 23, " Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offering, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices." Verse 24, " Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifice; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquity." Yet, verse 25, " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Here are sins, and great sins; and if the Lord will therefore pardon sin because it is great, unto his people; then surely they have no reason to be quite discouraged in this respect. Now look what David saith * in Psalm xxv. 11, " For thy name sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great." Mark his argument, " Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great:" if David use this reason, then may you also; and if this be a reason why God should pardon sin, because it is great; then this cannot be a reason, a just reason, why you should be discouraged.

But suppose that a man's sin be the sin of revolting, declining; for this is my case, will some say: I have striven, and striven against my sin a long while, and I return unto it again. Times were heretofore, that I have been exceeding forward and ready unto what is good; but now I am much declined, abated, and even gone backward with revolting, and deep revolting, and I have lain long so, even for many years. Have I not reason, and just reason now to be discouraged and cast down within myself?

I answer, No, not yet; for though this be a sufficient cause of great humiliation (for backsliding in scripture phrase is called rebellion, and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft), yet a good man hath no reason to be discouraged in this regard; for thus saith the Lord, Jer. iii. 1, " They say, if a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and

* יכ אוחבא quoniam grandis est.—Hierom.
πολλη γαρ εστι.—Septuagint.
מורא יגם אוה.—Chaldee Paraphrase.

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become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord." And, verse 12, "Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever." And again, verse 14, "Turn O backsliding children, for I am married unto you." And if ever the Lord Jesus Christ did betroth himself unto any soul, he will never put that soul away again: "I hate putting away," saith God. Men put away their wives among the Jews, but saith the Lord, "I hate putting away." And Isa. l. 1, "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away, or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" Among the Jews, the husband did put away his wife upon small occasions. As for adultery, you know that was death; he did not put away his wife upon adultery, she was to die for it: but the husbands put away their wives upon other occasions, and when they put away their wives, they gave the wife a bill of divorce, that so upon all occasions the woman might shew thereby that she was free from such a man. Now, saith the Lord, you that charge me, and complain that I have put you away, come and shew me the bill of divorce: "Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill," &c. Poor soul, thou complainest that I have put thee away, come then and shew me the bill of divorce: let any one who complains that I have put him away and cast him off, come and bring out his bill of divorce; this ye cannot do: men indeed put away, but if ever the Lord Christ doth match himself unto thee, he will never put thee away again.

And whereas you say, that you are declined, and have much revolted, and so have continued even many years, consider whether you be not mistaken; every abatement in affection is not a declining in grace: possibly we may not grieve for sin afterward so much as at our first conversion, yet we may hate it more: at first you may pray more against it, yet afterward watch more against it. We never see the face of sin so ugly, as in the glass of God's free love, and do you not see the free love of God more? Possibly your affections might be higher at the first, but is

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not conviction more clear and full? As affections dry up, so we grow more settled in our judgment; and if your judgment be more settled, you are not declined, though your affections be somewhat abated.

And whereas you say, that you have returned to your sin again and again, and have continued under your revolt for many years; I shall only tell you what Mr. Bilney, a blessed martyr once said. Hearing a minister preach very terribly against sin, and saying thus, Behold, thou old sinner, thou hast lain rotting in the grave of thy sin these threescore years, and dost thou now think to go to heaven in one year? dost thou think to go forward to heaven more in one year, than thou hast gone backward to hell these threescore years? Ah, said Mr. Bilney, here is goodly preaching of repentance in the name of Christ! had I heard such doctrine preached heretofore, my poor soul had despaired for ever; but, saith he, the Lord Christ died for sinners, young sinners and old sinners, for one as well as the other; such as have lain long in sin, as well as those that have lain but a little while in sin, if they will come home unto Christ. And you know what our Saviour saith, "If thy brother transgress against thee, forgive him." But, Lord, he hath transgressed against me once, and I have forgiven him: yet, saith our Saviour, forgive him again. Oh but, Lord, I have forgiven him again and again, and yet he returns to his fault again: then forgive him again, saith Christ. But, Lord, how often shall I forgive my brother? Saith our Saviour, If he sin against thee seventy-seven times, and says that he doth repent, do thou forgive so oft. And now shall the Lord Jesus Christ enjoin us to forgive our brother, if he sin against us seventy-seven times; and will not the Lord Christ forgive much more, if a poor soul do turn unto him and say, Lord, I repent me that I have sinned against thee. Will the Lord Christ command me a poor sinner to forgive so many times; how often will the great God forgive? what, seventy-seven times! nay, seven hundred times seven hundred. And have ye any reason then to be discouraged in this respect? surely you have not.

But suppose that a man hath sinned foully, greatly, and he cannot repent, or be humbled enough: for that is my case; I have sinned, I have sinned greatly, and now after all,

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my heart is hard, and I cannot be humbled enough, oh, I cannot repent enough: hath he not just cause and reason for his discouragement now, yea now to be quite discouraged?

No, not yet, for what if the Lord will have your humiliation from you by degrees? Should you be so, or so much humbled for the present, it may be it would be with you as it hath been with others, you would never think of your sins afterward; but may be the Lord will have this work of humiliation to stay long upon thy soul, and he will not give it you all at once. Some there are, that when they come into a house, they pay a great income and little rent, others pay a little income and a great rent: so it is with souls that come to Christ; some at the first lay down a great humiliation, and they have lesser of it afterward; some have less at the first, and have more afterwards by continuance in it: and what now if the Lord will lead thy soul in this latter way? this latter way may be the better way if the Lord think fit.

Again: it may be, that if you had so much, or so much humiliation now at the first, you would think, that in, and by, and for your humiliation you should have acceptance with God, and the remission of your sin; if you be kept off from this rock and danger, by your want of that degree of humiliation, which you would have, and so be trained up to prize the Lord's free grace in giving you humiliation, have you any cause to complain?*

Again: if you had so much, or so much humiliation for the present, it may be then, you would have the less humility; a little humility, is as good as a great deal of humiliation, as good being humble, as being humbled. Now because thou art not humbled, therefore thy soul is kept humble; hadst thou many tears, and abundance of tears, may be then thou wouldest be proud, but the Lord doth deny thee tears, and thou art not humbled to the degrees of thy own desires, and so the Lord keeps thee humble by the want of thy humiliation.

Again: it may be, that if you were humbled so, or so much at the present, or at the first, you would have the less

* Sepe negatur cum quæritur, et conceditur cum non expectatur, ut ex eo constet esse opus divinæ gratiæ.—Bonavent.

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fear of your own heart. The more humbled, it may be, the less after-fear, and the less humbled, the more after-fear, the less humbled, sometimes, the more a man fears his own heart and his own condition. Gracious fear is as good as humiliation, and if that which you want in humiliation you have it made up in fear, have you any reason to be discouraged? I know it is usual with Satan, to say unto the people of God at their first coming on to Christ, that they are not humbled enough, and so keeps them off from mercy and grace. But, I pray, tell me, can ye ever be humbled enough? Can there be any proportion between your sins and your humiliation? The truth is, we should labour that our humiliation be answerable to our sin; but God is not pleased with grief for grief, God is not pleased with sorrow for sorrow; the end of all our sorrow and grief is, to embitter our sin to us, to make us to prize Jesus Christ, to wean us from the delights and pleasures of the creature, to discover the deceitfulness and naughtiness of our own hearts. In scripture phrase, and language of the New Testament, repentance is called an after-wisdom, an after-mind, μετανοϊα, a bethinking of ones self, it is called a conviction; now though you be not humbled unto the degree which you do desire, yet notwithstanding, do you not bethink yourself, are you not convinced of the evil of your former way? hath not the Lord now given you an after-wisdom? and do not you say concerning your sin, Oh, if it were to do again, I would not do it for all the world? Thus it is with the servants and people of God, though they cannot be humbled so much as they would be, yet notwithstanding, they are thus far humbled, thus far grieved, that their sins are embittered, and themselves thereby weaned from the delights and pleasures of the world, convinced of the evil of their sin, and what they want in humiliation they have it in humility, the less humbled, the more they are kept humble, and what they do want at the first, they have it afterwards by degrees, soaking into their souls. Have they then any reason to be discouraged in these respects? surely, no.

But should not a godly, gracious man be fully grieved and humbled for his sin?

Grieved, humbled for his sin? yes, surely: though the Lord, through the over-ruling hand of his grace, do work

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never so much good out of my sin unto me, yet I am to be humbled for it, and the rather to be humbled for it, because he works good out of it. I have read indeed of the mother of those three learned men, Lombard, Gratian, and Comæstor, the three great pillars of the Roman Church, for Lombard wrote the Sentences, and Gratian the Popish Decretals, and Comæstor, Historiam Scholasticam, that when she lay on her death-bed, and the priest came unto her, and called upon her for repentance of her whoredoms,* for these three, Lombard, Gratian and Comæstor, were her bastards, as the very popish writers do record it, and he, telling her that she must be greatly afflicted, grieved and humbled for her uncleanness, or else she could not be saved, why, said she, I confess, indeed, that whoredom and uncleanness is a great sin, but considering what a great deal of good hath come to the church of God by my sin, that three such great lights have been brought forth into the world by my sin, *non valeo pœnitentiam agere*, I cannot, I will not repent. And thus it is with many poor ignorant souls, when they see, how the Lord by his over-ruling hand doth work good unto them out of their sin, as some outward blessings and mercies, they do not repent of their sin, but rather justify themselves in their sins: but now take a godly man, a gracious soul, and the more that he sees the Lord working good out of his sin, the more he is humbled for it; and upon that very ground, because God works good of it therefore he is humbled the more.

Yet further; it is observed, that though the Lord did ordinarily call David his servant, yet when David had sinned that great sin, he sent the prophet to him, saying, Go, say to David; he had lost the title of servant, now bare David, now single David, now David without the title my servant. And so, though God ordinarily called the people of Israel his people, yet when they had committed that great sin of

* Hos tres viz. Gratianum, Pet. Lombardum, et Pet. Comæstorem suisse Germanos ex adulterio natos, quorum mater, cum in extremis peccatum suum confiteretur et confessor redargueret crimen perpetrati adulterii, quia valde grave esset et ideo multum deberet dolore et penitentiam agere respondet illa; Pater, scio quod adulterium peccatum magnum est, sed considerans quantum bonum secutum est, cum isti silii mei sint lumina magna in Ecclesia, Ego non valeo penitere. Cui confessor hoc ex dono Dei est, ex te autem adulterium crimen magnum et dehoc doleas, &c.—Decret. fol. i. Gratiani vita.

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idolatry, in the matter of the golden calf, the Lord doth not call them his people, but he saith to Moses, The people, not My people, but The people, and Thy people, Moses; now they had lost their old title. Thus, I say, the sins of God's own people do deprive them, and divest them of their spiritual privileges, and can a gracious heart look upon this, and consider how he is divested and disrobed of his spiritual privileges, and not mourn under it? Can one friend grieve another friend, and not be grieved himself? The saints by their sins, they grieve God, who is their best friend, and therefore certainly they must needs be grieved, they must needs be humbled, or there is no grace; not grieved, not humbled, not gracious. But now because they are grieved, and humbled for sin committed, therefore they are not discouraged; I say, because they are grieved, and beeause they are humbled for sin committed, therefore they are not discouraged, for discouragement is a hindrance to humiliation, and the more truly a man is humbled for sin committed, the less he is discouraged, and the more a man is discouraged, the less he is truly humbled.

You will say, then, but what is the difference between these? a man is to be humbled, and not discouraged, not discouraged and yet to be humbled, what is the difference between these two, being humbled and being discouraged?

It is a profitable question, and worth our time: by way of answer, therefore, thus,

When a man is humbled, truly humbled, the object of his grief, sorrow or trouble, is sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God: the object of discouragement is a man's own condition, or sin in order to his own condition, the ultimate object of discouragement being a man's own condition. When a man is discouraged, you shall find still, that his trouble runs all out upon his own condition. Oh, saith a discouraged person, I have sinned; I have thus sinned, and therefore my condition is naught, and if my condition be naught now, it will never be better; Lord, what will become of my soul? Still his trouble is about his own condition. But when a man is grieved and truly humbled for sin, his trouble is about sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God. To clear this by Scripture: you know Cain was discouraged, but Cain was not humbled; how may that appear? Cain was

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troubled about his condition. Ah, saith he, my punishment is greater than I can bear. On the other side, the poor prodigal was humbled, but not discouraged: how may that appear? his trouble was about his sin, and not about his condition: "I will return unto my Father (saith he), and I will say unto him, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." David was sometimes both discouraged and humbled, and then you find his repentance and humiliation to be very brackish; but if you look into the list Psalm, you shall find David humbled but not discouraged, for it is a penitential Psalm, therefore humbled but not discouraged, for still he did keep his assurance; verse 14, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation." But what was his repentance, his trouble about? It was about his sin, and not about his condition, read verse 23, and so on: "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me; against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Still, ye see, his eye is upon his sin, and not upon his condition only. So that I say, when a man is truly humbled and grieved for sin, the object of his grief is sin, as a dishonour done unto God: whun a man is discouraged and not humbled, then his trouble is all about his condition, and what will become of him.

True humiliation, it is no enemy, but a real friend unto spiritual joy, to our rejoicing in God. The more a man is humbled for sin committed, the more he will rejoice in God, and rejoice that he can grieve for sin. He grieves, and rejoiceth that he can grieve for sin, therefore humiliation, by our Saviour Christ, is made an effect of the Comforter: "I will send the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin." Because there is comfort always goes along with true humiliation, it is not an enemy but a friend to our spiritual rejoicing; but discouragement is an enemy to spiritual joy. A man that is discouraged is grieved, and he is sad upon his grief, and if ye tell him that he must rejoice in God, and call upon him to rejoice in God, Oh no, saith he, it is not for me to rejoice, I am a man of another disposition, joy doth not

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belong to me, or to one in my condition: but now, when a man is truly humbled, the more he is humbled for sin, the more he can rejoice in God; but the more a man is discouraged, the less he rejoiceth in God.

The more a man is humbled, truly humbled for sin, the more he is found in duty; the more a man is discouraged, the more his hands are weakened to duty: as it is with the water, if the water do continue in its true stream, it doth not overflow the banks, it doth not break down the dam: sometimes you have a great fall of water, a great and mighty flood, and then the river overflows the banks, and the water bears down the dam. So here, duty is the bank of sorrow, grief and humiliation for sin; I say, your duties are the banks of all your godly sorrow, and when a man's sorrow or grief doth arise to such an height, that it swells over duty, and a man saith, I will pray no more, it is to no purpose; and I will hear no more, for there is no hope for my soul; and I will examine my own heart no more: when thus sorrow swells over duty, and breaks down the dam of duty, then it is discouragement, it is not humiliation: be not mistaken, this is not humiliation, this is a plain discouragement. There is a great difference then, between discouragement and humiliation. Many people indeed do call their discouragements, humiliation; but the Lord knows, there is not a drop of humiliation in a flood of discouragement: would you therefore be humbled? Oh, then, be not discouraged; for the more you are discouraged, the less you will be humbled; and the more humbled you are, the less discouraged you will be.

But if there be such a great difference between these, and if it be our duty, to be humbled for sin, but not to be discouraged; what should a man do to bear up his heart to the work of humiliation, and yet bear up against all discouragement? How shall I be so humbled, as I may not be discouraged? or what shall a man do that he may be humbled, and yet not be discouraged in his humiliation?

Let Christians carry this rule always up and down with them, namely, That a man is to be humbled for his sin, although it be never so small, but he is not to be discouraged for his sin, though it be never so great. Both these parts are true; a man is not to be discouraged under his sin, although it be never so great; because discouragement itself

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is a sin, and that cannot help against sin, sin cannot help against sin. A man is to be humbled for his sin, although it be never so small, for it is a dishonour to God, and little sins make way to great sins. So, then, if thou wouldest be humbled, and not discouraged, carry this rule up and down with you, and always remember it upon all occasions: It is my duty, and I have reason to be humbled for my sin, although it be never so small; but I have no reason to be discouraged under my sin, though it be never so great.

In all your humiliation, be sure that yon never part or separate those things that God hath joined together: God hath joined commandment and promise together, the promise and the commandment are born twins; there is never a commandment that you read of, but hath a promise annexed to it, a promise of assistance, a promise of acceptance, and a promise of reward. If you look upon the commandment itself without the promise, then you will despair; if you look upon the promise without the commandment, then you will presume: but look upon promise and commandment, commandment and promise together, then ye will be humbled, in case ye have sinned, but ye will not be discouraged. The Lord, you know, hath given two eyes to man, and if a man should put out one, and say, I can see well enough with the other, what need I have two? he should sin greatly. So for the soul, the Lord hath given two eyes, as I may so speak; the eye of conscience, which is to look upon God's commandment; and the eye of faith. which is to look upon God's promise: and if any man will say, I will put out the eye of faith, I can see well enough with the eye of conscience upon God's commandment, he shall do ill, and very ill: and if a man shall say, I will put out the eye of conscience, for I can see well enough with the eye of faith, he shall do very ill. But whenever you find you have sinned against any commandment, presently say, Where is the promise? I may not look upon the commandment without the promise, nor the promise without the commandment. Thus join both together, and you shall not be discouraged, yet be humbled.

In all your humiliation, take heed that you do not mourn for your sin only in order to your condition, but rather mourn over your condition in order to your sin. Humiliation, you have heard, is objectated upon sin itself, as a dishonour to

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God; the object of our humiliation is sin itself, as a dishonour done unto God: but now the object of our discouragement, you have heard, is our condition, only our condition. Well, then, would you be humbled so as you may not be discouraged? take heed that you do not stand poring only upon your condition, but rather say thus unto thine own soul; Oh, my soul, thou hast been much mistaken, the Lord pardon it, for all this questioning hath been about thy condition, and what will become of thee; and if at any time thou hast grieved for sin, it hath been in order to thy condition, because thy condition is naught, and because thou didst not know what should become of thee: but now, if thou wouldst be truly humbled, and not be discouraged, then lay aside a little the thoughts of your own condition, and pitch upon sin as a breach of God's law, a transgression of the law of God, a dishonour done to God, and as a breach of the law of love between Christ and you. Thus, I say, if you would be humbled, and not discouraged, rather mourn over your condition in order to your sin, than for your sin in order to your condition.

In your humiliation, take heed that you do not meddle too much with God's prerogative and with God's peculiar. In humiliation, a man is to meddle with that which belongs to man: some things there are that are peculiar to God and are his prerogative. You see how it is with the birds of the air; so long as the birds fly up and down here in the air, they do live comfortably; but if the birds do fly up to the element of fire, it will burn their wings, and they will fall down headlong. So here, so long as a man in his humiliation keeps within his own compass and element, he may walk comfortably there; but if a man in humiliation, will soar up unto God's prerogative, certainly his soul will fall down upon the earth and be much discouraged. Now, I pray, what is more the prerogative and peculiar of God than this, To know who is a reprobate and who is not? When a man is humbled and grieved about his sin, and he finds that he hath sinned much against God, and thereupon he concludes himself to be a reprobate, is not this to come upon God's prerogative? The Scripture tells a man, indeed, what he is for the present: That a man for the present is a drunkard, or a swearer, or a sabbath-breaker, or an adulterer; and therefore the Scripture tells

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him for the present, that he is in the state of nature, and under the wrath of God: but doth the Scripture tell him that he is a reprobate, that he can never be converted and turned to God? Surely this is God's great prerogative to know, his secret which he reserves to himself; and therefore when a man goes to be humbled before God, and concludes, Oh, I am a reprobate, and there is no hope for me, and I shall never be converted; this is to soar too high into God's prerogative, and he will burn his wings, and he will fall down into great discouragement. Therefore, in all your humiliation, take heed that you do not fall upon any thing that is the peculiar and prerogative of God, for then you will not be humbled but discouraged.

The more you are humbled and grieved by the sight of God's free love and grace, the more you will be humbled and the less discouraged. When you come to humiliation, you are humbled, because you have sinned against God; but how do you present this God to your own soul: do you present him as a Judge only, or as a Father also: do you present the Lord unto your soul only under the notion or attribute of his greatness, or under the notion and attribute of his goodness also? Luther said thus: When my heart is brisk and jolly, I present God unto myself under the notion of his greatness; but when my heart is low and fearing, then I present God to me under the notion of his goodness: one while I consider Christ as my example, another while as my gift: when my heart is too high, then I consider Christ as my example; when my spirit is too low, I consider Christ as my gift. So do you also. I know you will say, I cannot sometimes present the Lord unto my soul under the notion of a Father, because I have no assurance of his love. Yet you may consider the Lord as gracious in himself, as good in himself, and loving in himself, and say, I have thus and thus sinned against a gracious God, and although thou hast not assurance of God's love to thee in particular, yet if you can present God to your soul, under the notion of his general goodness, as good in himself, you will never be discouraged, but be humbled.

If you would be truly humbled, and not be discouraged; not discouraged, and yet humbled; then beat and drive up all your sins to your unbelief, and lay the stress and weight of all your sorrow upon that sin. As in matter of thank-

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fulness, if a man do run up every mercy, unto the fountain mercy, the blood of Jesus Christ, he will be most thankful: so in the matter of humiliation, if a man do run up every sin unto the fountain, the head sin, he will be most humbled. Now what is the great sin, the fountain sin, the head sin of all your sins, but unbelief; and believe it, he is never far from faith, that is humbled for his unbelief, and he will never be discouraged that is not far from faith. Now therefore, if at any time you find your soul in any sin, then say, This hath my unbelief done, I did not think that I had had such an unbelieving heart; oh, what an unbelieving heart have I! This, even all this sin hath my unbelief brought forth. Now the Lord heal my unbelieving heart. A soul grieved for unbelief will never be discouraged too much, nor be humbled too little: he will be humbled in truth for sin, because he is humbled for his unbelief, which is the mother sin; yet he will not be discouraged, because he is humbled for that which doth cause all discouragements. Lay therefore the weight of your sorrow upon this sin, and you shall be truly humbled without unjust discouragement. And thus I have despatched the first particular: by all which you see, that a gracious, godly man, though he hath just cause for humiliation, yet he hath no just and scripture reason to be discouraged for his sin; though he have sinned, and sinned greatly, yet no discouragement is to grow upon this condition.

And thus I have done with the first instance.

SERMON V.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF WEAK GRACE.

"*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c.*"—Psalm xlii. 11.

II. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints do arise from the weakness of their graces.

Oh, says one, I am a poor, feeble, and a weak creature: some are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,

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who do a great deal of service for God in their day; but as for me, I am a poor babe in Christ, if a babe, and so am able to do little or nothing for God. Therefore I am thus discouraged and cast down; have I not just cause and reason for it?

No, for "God is able to make all grace to abound towards you, that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work," 2 Cor. ix. 8. And if God have recompensed your weakness with wisdom, then surely you have no cause to complain of your weakness. Sometimes weakness is recompensed with wisdom; for, says Solomon, Prov. xxx. 24, "There be four things that are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:" the ants, the conies, the locusts, and the spider. Wherein doth the wisdom of the ants consist? He tells you in verse 25, "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in summer." In time of plenty they do lay up for the time of want. Wherein doth the wisdom of the conies consist? He tells you in verse 26, "The conies are a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks:" though they be weak in themselves, yet they dwell in strong places. Wherein doth the wisdom of the locusts appear? He tells you in verse 27, "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands:" though they be weak alone, yet they do join together, and so are strong. But wherein doth the wisdom of the spider consist? He tells you in verse 28, "The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' chambers:" though the chamber of a king is most swept and cleansed, yet by the industry of her hands she doth take hold on the beams thereof, and dwells on high, out of danger. So that, although these creatures are weak and feeble in themselves, yet by their wisdom, their weakness is recompensed, and they save themselves from injury and wrong, as well as if they were stronger.* Now shall the ant, cony, locust and spider, be wise in their kind, and shall not a christian be so? True, saving grace is the best wisdom; every godly man is a wise man, and though he be but weak in grace, yet he hath true wisdom: the wisdom of the

* Admonemur nullam creaturam propter parvitatem contemnendam esse, quando quidem quod illis in corporis mole deest, aliis quibus a Deo ornantur datibus compensari solet.—Cartwright in Prov.

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ants, to provide in summer against a rainy day; the wisdom of the conies, to build in the rock Christ; the wisdom of the locusts, to join with others; and the wisdom of the spider, to take hold on those beams of the promises, which are in the chamber of our King, Christ. And if God have thus recompensed your weakness with this wisdom, why should you then complain?

But is it then no disadvantage for a man to be weak in grace?

Yes, much, very much; there are many disadvantages which a weak christian lies under, that a strong christian doth not. Ye see how the weak fire lies sobbing under the disadvantage of green wood, which the strong fire doth not; so doth Christ's smoking flax lie under many disadvantages, which the strong christian doth not. As,

Though a man have truth of grace, yet if he be but weak in grace, he is more apt and ready to stumble and fall, and to be turned out of the way. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees," saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 12, "Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." A weak man is more apt to fall than a strong; and if he do fall, he is more unable to rise again. A strong man fallen, is quickly up again; but the weak falls, and is ready to fall again when he rises: so it is with a weak christian, he stumbles often and is apt to fall; and if he have fallen, he is even ready to fall again when he goes about to rise.

He is more easily quenched, in regard of his comforts, than the strong christian is. A strong christian will improve that for himself which seems to be against him; but the weak christian will improve that against himself which is in truth for him. When our Saviour Christ said to the woman of Canaan, "It is not lawful to cast children's bread before dogs;" she made an advantage of those words, and thereby did gather in upon Christ, saying, "True, Lord, but the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table." Thus she improved that for herself, which seemed to be against her: why? because she was strong in faith; "O woman," saith our Saviour, "great is thy faith." But when the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah, Judges xiii, he said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen the Lord." Thus he improved that against him, which did make for him,

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as his wife truly interpreted the thing, verse 23: why so, but because he was weak in faith. The strong fire burns the more by the very water that is cast upon it, but the weak fire is quenched by the very fuel, wood, or coal that is cast on it; so a weak christian also is apt to be quenched, even by those very truths and dispensations whereby he should burn and blaze out the more.

He cannot glorify God as the strong christian may and doth. One sun doth glorify the Creator more than an hundred other stars, because there is much light met in one body; and one strong christian doth glorify God more, than an hundred lesser, weak saints, because there is much light and grace met in one person. "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith God, Psalm l. 23.

It is an hard thing for the weak christian to praise God, for he often doubteth of God's love, and therefore cannot praise him as he should; but the strong christian may, he can say, Blessed be the Lord for this or that mercy, for it comes from love to me.

The more a man doth believe above hope and under hope, and the less he doth live by sense, the more he glorifies God. Now the strong christian is able to exercise his faith in this kind, for says the apostle Paul, "Abraham considered not his own body, but being strong in faith, was persuaded that God was able, and so did give glory unto God," Rom. iv. A weak faith cannot do so, for saith the apostle, verse 13, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." It seems then that it is the strong, and not the weak faith which doth give glory to God. And would ye know wherein this strong faith differs from the weak faith, in regard of its operation? why, says the apostle, the weak faith staggers at the promise, which the strong faith doth not; the weak faith doth attend too much unto second causes, which the strong faith doth not; the weak faith judges by what it sees and feels within, but the strong doth not, but by the word without; and therefore it is strong faith which doth give glory unto God especially.

A strong christian will do great things for God, a weak christian can do but small things, for his strength is but

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small, and his soul little. Now the greater things we do for God, the more we glorify him.*

A strong christian can mind and tend the public, but a weak christian cannot. I have enough to do at home, saith he, oh, that my own everlasting condition were but settled, and then would I mind the public too.

A strong christian is able to wait long on God; he that waiteth long with quietness, honours God: but as your weaker children cannot stay long for what they would have, but must be served presently; so the weak christian also cannot wait long on God for what he would have: but the strong christian doth.

A strong christian is helpful unto others. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," Rom. xv. 1. And again, "Him that is weak in the faith receive you," xiv. 1. Children and babes are fit to be carried in others' arms, but are not able to carry others. The weak christian is apt to be offended with others, to censure and judge others, and so to make burdens for others to bear, Rom. xiv. 1, 2. But the strong christian is a bearing christian, a carrying christian, one that can displease himself that he may help another. Now the more serviceable and helpful a man is to others, the more he glorifies God; thus the strong christian is, but the weak cannot in all these things give glory to God as the strong christian may. Surely therefore there are many disadvantages which a weak christian lies under, that the strong christian doth not.

Yet there is no reason why he should be discouraged.

For weakness doth not exclude from mercy, but inclines God unto mercy, rather. Psalm vi. 2, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." It is spoken of an outward weakness; and if that which is less doth incline God to mercy, then much more that which is greater.

And if he have as great an interest in Christ, as many promises to run unto, and as many embraces of love from God the Father, as the strong christian hath; then there is no just cause why he should be cast down in regard of his weakness.

Now so it is, though your grace be never so weak, yet if

* Ολιγοπιστος ολιγοψυχος, 1 Thess. v. 14.

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ye have truth of grace, you have as great a share and interest in the righteousness of Christ for your justification, as the strong christian hath. You have as much of Christ imputed to you, as any other. It may be you have gathered less of this manna, for your spending sanctification; but if you be an Israelite indeed, you have so much of this manna, as that you have no lack: for it is said of the Israelites, "They gathered some more, some less; yet he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack;" all which figured that equal proportion, saith Mr. Ainsworth, which all believers have in Christ, the spiritual manna.

And if ye look into Scripture, where do God's promises fall more thick, than upon those that are weak in grace? Christ begins his preaching with the promises, Matt. v.; and I pray, what are those persons whom the promises are especially made unto, but such as are weak in grace? "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are those that mourn." He doth not say, Blessed are those that are strong in grace; or blessed are those that rejoice in God; or those that have full assurance of their everlasting estate and condition: no, but as if his great work and business were to comfort, uphold, and strengthen the weak, these he begins withal, and many gracious, rich and blessed promises he doth make to them. Yea, the promises are so made to them, as, attended to, will give a full answer unto all their fears: as, for example, the Lord promises, Matt. xii., "That he will not break the bruised reed," &c. Will the weak christian say, Oh, but I am exceeding weak, and very feeble: then our Saviour says, "He will not break the bruised reed." And what more weak and feeble than a bruised reed? an whole reed is not very strong at the best, but bruised it is weak indeed. Will the weak christian say, Oh, but my weakness is mingled with many sins; so the fire in the smoking flax is mingled with smoke, yet says Christ, "I will not quench the smoking flax." Will the weak christian say, Oh, but, though God do not quench me, yet I shall be quenched; Nay, saith Christ, "but I will bring forth judgment unto victory;" it lies on my hand to do it and I will do it. Will the weak christian say, Oh, but, I have much opposition in my way, how can judgment come to victory? then Christ says, he will bring

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forth, εως αν εκβαλλη, thrust forth with violence; it is the same word that is used in other scriptures, noting a force;* as if Christ should say, I will force this victory through all opposition, that it shall meet withal. So that the Lord doth not only give several promises to those that are weak in grace, but he doth so lay them, as he doth help to apply them.

And if ye look into your experience, who have more kisses, and embraces of love from God our Father, than the weak christian hath? The parent kisseth the babe and little child, when the elder child is not kissed; for, says he, this is but a little child. And so, when the prodigal comes home, then the father falls upon his neck and kisses him, why? but because upon his first return, he is a babe in Christ; this is my little child, saith the father, and therefore I will kiss him with the kisses of my mouth.

And though it be a great affliction to be weak in grace, yet if Christ will condescend unto mine infirmities, why should I be discouraged in regard thereof? Condescending mercy is great and sweet mercy: now though God doth shew mercy unto all his people, yet he will do it by Christ as an high priest; and what is the work and office of the high priest? but to sympathise and bear with the infirmities of those that are weak, "We have not such an high priest (saith the apostle) as cannot be touched with our infirmities," Heb. iv. 15. Three things there are, which do speak out the condescending love of God to those that are weak in grace; 1. He accepts their duties, though mingled with many weaknesses; and their services, though they grow upon a weak stock,* Rev. iii. 8., "I know thy works, (saith Christ to the Church of Philadelphia) for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." 2. The Lord doth not over-drive those that are weak, but is contented to go their pace with them, Isa. xl. 11, "He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

* Matt. vii. 5, εκβαλε πρωτον την δοκον.
Matt. ix. 38, οπως εκβαλη εργατας.
Matt. x. 5, δαιμονια εκβαλλετε.
* Christus fidem et jamsi infirmam fovet.

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3. He doth sometimes, yea, oftentimes, yield unto their desires, going, as it were, after them, Matt. ix. 18, "There came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is now dead, but come and lay thine hand on her; and Jesus arose and followed him." The man had faith, for he said, "Only lay thine hand on her, and she shall live:" yet his faith was weak, for he limited and stinted Christ, both to time and means; "Come down, and lay thine hand on her." In the viiith chapter, a centurion comes to him, for the cure of his servant, and he was strong in faith; for saith Christ, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Christ doth prevent, and goes before him; for when he saith, verse 6, "My servant lies sick, Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him:" here Christ offered to go; No, Lord, saith the centurion, "Speak the word only." But the ruler desires Christ to go with him, and he followed him; Christ prevents the strong, and he followeth the weak; he commends the strong centurion, and he condescendeth to the weak ruler. What then, though the weak ruler be not commended as the strong centurion was, should he be discouraged? No, because Christ's condescending love was as fit for him, as his commending favour was for the centurion: strong grace shall be more commended, but weak grace shall be much encouraged by the condescending love of Christ.

If Christ have put a *Why* and *Wherefore* upon the discouragements of the weak, then they have no true reason to be discouraged, in regard of their weakness. Now if ye look into Matt. viii. 26, ye shall find, that our Saviour says to his disciples, "Why are ye doubtful, O ye of little faith?" Ye read in verse 24, that there arose a great tempest, insomuch that the ship was covered with water; was not here cause of fear? yet says Christ, Why are ye fearful? Yea, it is said that their Help was asleep; Christ was their only help in the storm, and verse 24, "He was asleep;" had they not then cause to fear? yet says Christ, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" The like ye have in Matt. xvi. 8, Jesus said, "O ye of little faith why reason ye amongst yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?" Here is another Why put upon their discouragements. So again, Matt. xiv. 31, when Peter began to sink, he cried out,

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and Christ said unto him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Here is another Why or Wherefore put upon the discouragement of a weak faith. Now why doth our Saviour speak after this manner to them? Why do ye doubt? and Why are ye fearful? Not only to reprove their doubting and discouragement, but to shew that there was no reason for it: though their outward discouragements were great and their faith was but small, yet he tells them, that they had no reason for to be discouraged, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? It seems then, by these Why's and Wherefore's, that though a man's faith be small, and his outward discouragements great, yet he hath no just and true reason for to be discouraged.

And if a Christian would be discouraged, if he did not sometimes find a weakness and smallness of grace within him, then he hath no reason to be discouraged, because he doth find this weakness. Now ye know, that the kingdom of heaven, both without us, in the gospel, and within us, in regard of the saving effect of the gospel, is compared to a grain of mustard-seed, which, saith our Saviour, is the least of all seeds; but grows up in time, to that stature, height, and bigness, as the fowls of the air come and make their nests in it. So is the gospel, both in the preaching and the effect of it: it begins low, and is very little at the first; and therefore, if a man should not find his grace to be small at the first, he would doubt whether ever the kingdom of heaven were in him or no, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed, the least of all seeds; but I have not found it so in my soul, I have not found this littleness and smallness of grace, and therefore I do fear that the kingdom of heaven was never in my soul in truth. Thus men would doubt, and be discouraged, if they should not sometimes find their grace to be small. And if so, then why should a man be discouraged, because he doth find it thus? Surely he hath no just cause or reason for it.

Oh, but yet, it is an uncomfortable thing to be weak; strong christians are full of comfort: they have assurance of God's love, and are full of joy; but the weak are full of fears and doubts. This is my condition; I am most uncomfortable, therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

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No: for though the weakness of grace is usually accompanied with doubts and fears, and the strength of grace, with assurance, joy and comfort; yet it is possible, that a man may have a great deal of grace, yet may have no assurance; and a man may have assurance, not doubting of God's love, and yet may have but little grace.

Ye must know, that there is a difference between uncomfortableness and less comfort. If a man be possessed of a great estate in the world, he hath more comfort than another, who hath but the pledge and earnest of it; but though I am not possessed of it, yet if I have the earnest and pledge of it, I may have much comfort in it. Now the least grace, is a pledge and earnest of more, yea, of the greatest measure; and is it not a comfortable thing, for a man to have the pledge and earnest of glory? Such have all those that are weak, though they be but weak in grace.

But how shall I know that my little, is a pledge and earnest of more?

The Spirit of adoption, is a pledge and earnest of the whole inheritance: and though you cannot do so much service for your heavenly Father, as your elder and stronger brother doth, yet if you do not only obey God because you see a reason in his commandments, but because there is a child-like disposition in you, then have you the Spirit of adoption, and so your little, is a certain pledge of more.

And if you mourn over your little, and wait on God for more, then is your little an earnest of much: Rom. viii. 23, "And not only they, but ourselves also (saith the apostle) which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." He proves, that the Romans had the first-fruits, the pledge and earnest of more in the Spirit, by their groaning and waiting: do I therefore groan under the present burden of my own weakness, waiting upon God for more, then have I the first fruits of the Spirit; and so that little which I have, is a pledge and earnest of more: and upon this account, though your grace be weak, and small in itself, yet considered as an earnest, it is much: and is it not a comfortable thing, to have the pledge and earnest of glory? Such is the comfort of all those that are weak in

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grace, and therefore why should they be discouraged in regard of their weakness?

Oh! but, I am not discouraged at my weakness, in regard of the uncomfortableness of it, but in regard of the unserviceableness of it: for if I were strong in grace, I should be able to do more service for God; then I should be able to resist my temptations, and to overcome the evil one: for the apostle John saith, "I write to you young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil one." But I have great temptations, and but small strength to resist them: I have a great deal of work to do for God, and have no strength to do it with; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for the spiritual battle is not always to the strong: our victory lies not in ourselves and our own habitual strength, but in Christ's fresh assistance. How often have the strong fallen, and the weak stood? We read of that young King, Edward the Sixth, that when the Emperor sent to him, desiring that his sister Mary, afterwards Queen of England, might have liberty for the mass in her house, this young prince did stand out against that temptation, when all his Council was for it; yea, when that good man, bishop Cranmer, and that other holy man, bishop Ridley, did yield thereunto, and pressed the King to it, insomuch as the King did break forth into tears, desiring them to be contented; whereupon, the archbishop Cranmer took his schoolmaster, Mr. Cheke, by the hand, and said, Ah, Mr. Cheke! you have such a scholar that hath more divinity in his little finger, than all we have in our whole bodies. Here the weak stood, and the strong did fall; the weak did resist temptation, when the strong did yield; for our strength lies in Christ without us, not in ourselves within us. And if ye look into the ii nd and iiird chapters of the Revelation, ye shall find, that whereas all the churches are charged with some sin or other, only the Church of Philadelphia is charged with no sin at all, but commended for keeping the word of Christ's patience; and yet this church, and no other, is said to have a little strength. And ye know what Paul saith, "When I am weak, then am I strong; most gladly therefore will I rejoice in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me," 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

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Though your grace be weak, yet you may do much for God in your day: "The tongue (says James) is a little member, and boasteth great things; behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth," chapter iii. 5. "Behold also the ships, (saith he, verse 4) which though they be so great, yet are they turned about with a very small helm."* And shall not a little grace do as much as a little tongue, or as a little fire, or as a little helm? Surely, though grace be little, yet it may be an helm unto all your life, a rudder unto all your practices. Ye see how fruitful weak things are in nature; the strongest persons have not always most children, but the weaker. The herring is a weak fish in comparison of the whale, and what abundance are there? The dove is a feeble bird in regard of the eagle, and yet how fruitful is it? The vine is a weak tree in regard of the oak, and yet it is more fruitful. So in grace; you may be weak in grace, yet you may be very fruitful. The jailor was but weak in grace as soon as he was converted, nor Zaccheus, nor the thief on the cross; yet what clusters of divine grapes did presently grow upon these branches? And if you may be very fruitful in good, though weak, why should you be discouraged in regard of your weakness?

Oh, but I am not discouraged at my weakness, in regard of my unserviceableness, or unfruitfulness only, but in regard of my own guiltiness; for I have made myself weak in grace by mine own sins; I have fallen into sin, and so have weakened my self and grace: my grace is not only weak, but it is weakened, and weakened by sin; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for possibly you may be mistaken: some do abate in their natural parts, and they think they decay in their graces: as some grow in parts and gifts, and they think they grow in their graces. But if you have not fallen into any great and gross sin, then no such spiritual disease or fever hath seized on you, whereby your grace should be weakened.

But suppose the thing be true, which you do object, that you have sinned, and by your own sin your grace is now

* Quod autem tam minuta et infirma animalia in rupibus domicilia sibi exculpent, confirmare nos debet, ut non dubitemus etiam infirmi et imbellos quæ difficilia sunt aggredi dummodo officii ratio id postulet. Cartwright in Prov. xxx. 14. quatuor parva sunt in terra.

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weakened; then have you cause indeed to be much humbled before the Lord, yet not to be discouraged. For, if nothing have befallen you, but what may possibly befal a true believer, then you have no reason to be cast down as without hope. Now ye know how it was with Samson; he was strong, and of great strength inward and outward; yet his strength was taken away, and he became as one of us. How so? why, he had laid his head in Dalilah's lap, and so he lost his strength, and was weakened by it; but it cost him dear, both his eyes, and his life too: and if you have so laid your head in Dalilah's lap, that your strength is abated, it may, and it is likely it will cost you dear: yet this case is no other than what may befal one recorded for a true believer.

And though your strength be abated, and your grace weakened, through your own sin; yet being true saving grace, it shall never he annihilated, for it is the new creation; and nothing created by God, can be annihilated by us. Man is created by God; he may be killed by man, but he cannot be annihilated, and brought to nothing: the tree and wood may be burnt to ashes, but it cannot be annihilated and brought to nothing, for it is part of the creation. Now your grace was created by God also, if true, though small; and therefore, though it may be weakened by your sin, yet it cannot be annihilated and brought to nothing.

And if yet the promise do belong to you, and to your condition, then you have no reason to be discouraged or cast down, in respect of this. Now if ye look into Rev. iii. ye shall find, that as there are many promises made to the several churches, so there are promises also made to the church of Sardis; yet this church had fallen and weakened herself; for says Christ to her, verse 13, "Strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die; I have not found thy works perfect:" so that though your grace be weakened, and that by your own sin, insomuch as all seems to be ready to die, yet there is a promise belonging to such a condition, and therefore no just cause or reason for discouragement, though much cause of humiliation.

But I am not discouraged at the weakness of my grace, because of mine own guiltiness only, but because of its likeness and similitude unto common grace; I know that it is a

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contradiction to say, that a little grace is no grace at all; but my little is so little, that I even fear it is none in truth. If the piece of coin that I have be little, yet if it be gold, it is well; but if it be little, and a counter too, then what am I the better? Now so it is, that I fear my little is but a counter, and not true grace indeed; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for though your grace be never so small, yet if it be good coin, and not a counter, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this regard. Now to satisfy you in this scruple, I will tell you what small, weak, little grace will do, and not do, in opposition to common grace.

It will not oppose much grace; the least spark of fire will not oppose the flame, or resist the flame; water will, because fire and water are contrary: and so, false grace will oppose the highest degree of grace, saying, What need you be so strict and precise? You may go to heaven with less ado: but the least degree of true grace will not oppose the highest.

It loves examination, it loves to examine, and to be examined; for it is sincere, and sincerity is much in examination: it is called εἰλικρινία, for it holds up all its actions to the sun and light; it doth love the work of examination: false, counterfeit, common grace doth not so.

It is very inquisitive after the ways of God, and after further truths: as the man that climbs up into the tree, first gets hold on the lower boughs, then on the higher, and so winds himself into the body of the tree, till he comes to the top, so doth a christian do; he begins with the lower, then unto the higher, and so to higher discoveries: at the first, therefore, he is most inquisitive, "What shall I do to be saved?" says he; and again, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" False and common grace is not so.

It is much in the work of humiliation; it grows in a waterish place. Now suppose that two herbs be much alike, the one sovereign, and the other naught, and it be told you, that the sovereign, good herb, grows in a waterish place, and the other on a rock, will you not easily discern those by the places where they grow? Thus it is here: the weak grace of the saints, grows in a waterish place, it is much in humiliation; but the common, false grace of hypocrites,

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grows on a rock. As a weak christian is very apt to rest upon his own doings, so he is much in doing, and in the work of humiliation most.

It works according to the proportion of its own weakness; it staggers at the promise, yet it goes to the promise; it doubts of Christ's love, yet it doth run to Christ; it stumbles, yet it doth keep its way; it is ignorant of Christ, and not so forward in the knowledge of Christ as it should be, yet it is laying of the foundation, Heb. vi. 1. It is the fault of a weak christian, that he is always laying the foundation, yet he is laying of the foundation; though it works weakly, yet it works according to the proportion of its weakness; but the common, false grace doth not so.

It is willing to learn of others; for, says a weak christian, I am but a babe in Christ, and therefore why should not I be willing to be carried in others arms? The less I can do, the more I will receive: as the strong christian is much in doing, so must I be much in receiving: it is not thus with that false and common, counterfeit grace. But as the naturalists do report and write of the lion, that he will not eat of any prey, but what he hath hunted down himself;* other beasts will, they will prey upon what is killed by others; but the lion, king of the beasts, is so proud, that he will not eat of that which is killed by another. So, men that are strong in parts and gifts, and have no grace withal, will not eat of that which they do not hunt down themselves; if they hunt it down, then they will close therewith, else not. A strong-graced christian will, and a weak-faithed christian will, but he that hath parts and gifts alone, cannot relish that so well, which is brought to hand by another.

It is very sensible of its own weakness: a weak christian is weak, and he doth feel his weakness, and is very sensible of it; not a man in all the world, saith he, that is more weak than I.† Now ye know, that if a lady or queen come to an house, she hath a great train attending upon her, and though ye see her not, yet if you see her train, you say, she is there still. Such a great queen is grace; though a man have never so little of it, yet it brings a great train with it; and

* Ælian de animal.

† Deo placet fides infirma modo, nobis non placet fidei infirmitas.—Austin.

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though ye see it not, yet if you see the train, will ye not say, surely the grace of God is here? Thus now it is with you that are weak in grace; these seven things, and a far greater train than these, you may see in your lives, and therefore certainly, you have no just cause and reason for your discouragements in this respect.

Oh, but yet, this is not the thing that doth pinch with me: I hope, through mercy, the root of the matter is in my soul, that this great queen of grace hath taken up her lodging in my heart; but yet I am exceeding weak in grace, and very feeble still: some are weak in grace because they are but new plants, new converts, lately brought home to Christ, and are yet babes in Christ, and so they have excuse for their weakness; but I profess that I have been converted a great while, yet I am weak; I am an old man or woman, yet I am weak in grace; I am an old professor, and yet am weak in grace: therefore I am thus disquieted, have I not just cause and reason now?

No; for though it is a shame for an old man to go in coats, or to be carried in the arms like a babe, as every weak christian is; and though Christ will upbraid men of their slowness and dulness, that have long sat under the means, yet you have no just cause and reason for discouragement; for though you may be weak in regard of others, yet you may be strong in regard of your former self, and be more strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, than you have been heretofore. And to clear that, consider—

1. The more extensive a man's obedience is unto God's commandments, the more he is grown in grace. Weak christians are much in some duties, and therein they are most intense: but little or nothing in others: and as they grow in grace, so their hearts are dilated, and extended unto other duties.

2. The more exact and accurate a man is in duty, the more he doth grow in grace; and the more he grows in grace, the more exact and accurate he doth grow in his duty. He that writes better than he did before, doth not write more paper, or make more letters, only he doth write more exactly and accurately: so, the grown christian doth not perform more duties than he did before, but the same more exactly.

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3. The more a man sees and understands his christian liberty, and yet doth walk more strictly, the more he doth grow in grace: some think they grow in grace, because they have more understanding in their christian liberty, though they do walk more loosely; these are deceived in their spiritual growth; but if I know my christian liberty more fully, and now do walk more strictly in my life, then do I grow in grace indeed. Now is it not thus with you? Yes! through grace I am able to say, that I see my christian liberty more than I did heretofore; and yet I am more strict in my life: though I cannot yet pray as I would, and hear as I would, and perform duty as I would, yet I do perform my duties with more exactness than formerly; and though I have not so much affection as I had in this or that work of God, yet now I find, that I am more dilated, and my obedience is more extended and extensive unto God's ways and commandments than before. Then though you are still weak in regard of others, yet you are grown stronger in regard of your former self, and therefore certainly, you have no just cause or reason to be discouraged in this regard.

But suppose that I am yet but weak in grace, and temptations or discouragements press in upon me, in regard of the weakness of my grace; what shall I do that I may be able to bear up my heart against those discouragements?

Then consider what a great charge God the Father hath given to Christ of those that are weak, Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him." &c.: but why? verse 3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." This is my charge, saith the Father, which I give to my Son: and upon this account he came into the world, that those who have life might have it in abundance: and for this cause he did die for us, Rom. v. 6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time (or according to the time, that is, the time appointed by the Father), Christ died for the ungodly."

Consider also, what charge our Saviour Christ did give unto his apostles, and in them, to all the ministers of the gospel, concerning those that are weak in grace. "Peter, Peter, (said our Saviour) lovest thou me? (then) feed my sheep." And again, "Lovest thou me? (then) feed my

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lambs." And again, thirdly, "Lovest thou me? feed my lambs." Have a care of those that are weak in grace. All the time that Christ lived upon earth, he went about doing good, healing all sicknesses and diseases, and condescending to the weaknesses of men. One comes to him, and thought to have stolen her cure, yet Christ did bear with her. Another comes, and puts an *if* upon his will, "Lord, *if* thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and he did bear with him. Another comes, and puts an *if* upon his power, "Lord, *if* thou canst do any thing," &c. Yet Christ did yield to him. And when he left the world, then he charges his apostles with the weak saints, "Feed my lambs;" and again, "Feed my lambs."

Consider also, what a great mercy it is to have a little grace, though it be but a little; for though you have never so little grace, yet if you have grace in truth, you have union with Christ, you have communion with the Father, you have your own nature taken away, and are partakers of the divine nature; you have a right and title unto all the promises; yea, unto all the ordinances; yea, unto all the creatures. Your afflictions are not curses, the curse is taken out of every cross, you have an interest in all that Christ hath done and suffered, you are made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away: you have God for your portion, Christ for your Saviour, the Spirit for your Comforter, heaven for your inheritance, the angels for your guard, and all the creatures in the earth under your feet; this, and all this you have, though you have never so little grace; and can you read over all this inventory of mercies, and sit discouraged in the midst of them?

Yet if all this will not prevail in the time of your temptation, think with yourself, and consider seriously, How much you shall weaken yourself, yet more and more, by your discouragements in this kind. All discouragements weaken; humiliation weakens not, the greatest humiliation doth not weaken, but the least discouragement doth, upon what account soever. Now if all discouragements do weaken, then what an unreasonable thing is it for me to be discouraged at the sight of my weakness? But so it is, that discouragements, even from the sight of our own weakness, do yet

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more and more weaken; surely, therefore, it is an unreasonable thing for a man to be discouraged at the sight of his own weakness: wherefore, lift up your hands, oh ye saints, and be ye lift up, oh ye drooping souls. We are commanded, ye may read our commission, Isa. xxxv. 3, "to strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees, and to say to them that are of a fearful spirit, Be strong, fear not." And if it be our duty to say and speak thus, then it is your duty to encourage yourself in the Lord, and to say to yourself, Be strong, oh my soul, and fear not. Be thankful for your little, and in due time you shall have much: labour also for much, yet be content with little, even with little grace, if God will have it so.

And thus I have done with the second instance.

SERMON VI.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF MISCARRIAGE OF DUTIES.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c."—Psalm xlii. 11.

III. Sometimes the discouragements of the saints and people of God, are drawn from their duties, the failings and successlessness of their duties.

For they reason thus: through the Lord's grace and mercy, I have been kept from great and gross sins, yet if the Lord loved me indeed, he would draw my heart near unto himself; but when I come to prayer, or duty, I find so much deadness, dulness and awkness of heart and spirit, that I fear the Lord will never accept such an one as I am, nor such duties as mine are: when I go to prayer, either prayer is altogether absent from me, or I have no life therein; if I go to hear the word, I am not attentive, but filled with distractions; and whatever duty I perform, I want life and love in it. Oh, my heart is like a rock or stone, and therefore I fear the Lord will not accept my duty, and the rather, be-

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cause I find, that I have been long at prayer, and I am never the better, the Lord hears me not, the Lord regards me not; and have I not just reason and cause to be discouraged now?

No: here is reason, indeed, why you should be afflicted, but no reason yet, why you should be discouraged. I confess, indeed, here is cause and reason of grief and of affliction; for take prayer, to instance only in that, and it is that act and work of the soul, whereby a man doth converse with God; God conversing with man, and man with God. And is it not a sore affliction, for a poor creature to be shut out of God's door, such a friend as God is? Oh, saith Chrysostom, it is more bitter than death, to be spoiled of prayer: and hereupon, as he observes, Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to lose his prayer. Prayer is the soul's weapon, and is it not a grief to want a weapon in our spiritual warfare? Prayer is the soul's ornament, the excellent garment of a christian; and is it not an affliction, to be without this garment, and to be found naked? Prayer is the christian's element; and as the fish lives in the water as in its element, and dies when it is out, so a christian lives in prayer as in his element, and his heart dies when he is out of it. Prayer is the soul's provisioner, fetcheth in provision for the soul and for all its graces: the old bird, the dam, goes abroad and fetcheth in meat for the young ones, and they lie in the nest gaping, to receive the meat upon its return; and if the old one be killed abroad, the young ones will die presently at home. So here, prayer goes abroad, and fetcheth in provision for all our graces, and they all lie gaping, to receive this provision from the mouth of prayer; if this be killed, how can those other graces live? The truth is, the more sweetness a christian finds in any work, the greater is his affliction, if he want that work; now what abundance of sweetness, doth a gracious soul find in prayer? therefore when a man is narrowed, or shut up in prayer, it cannot but be a great affliction to him. But though it be a matter of great affliction, yet a good man hath no reason to be quite discouraged, yea, though he meet with many failings therein, and cannot pray as he would, nor perform duty as he should.

How may that appear?

Thus—

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Every godly, gracious man, is in covenannt with God by Jesus Christ; and that covenant is a covenant of grace, which is the great charter, the magna-charta of all his spiritual privileges and immunities. Now in this great charter, the Lord doth proclaim this, that sincerity shall go for perfection; that a little done for God, in the time of temptation, shall be counted much. In this great charter, the Lord doth proclaim unto all his people, that he doth rather regard the bent of the heart, than the enlargement of the heart; that he doth rather regard the will to do, than the doing. In this great charter, the covenant of free grace, the Lord proclaims unto all his people, that if they do fail in prayer, and other duties, for I speak not of prayer only, though I instance in that, he will not cast them off, but he will rather be moved to pity them; for the covenant that the Lord makes with his people, is as the covenant that a man makes with his wife, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever," Hosea 2, saith the Lord. Now a man will not put away his wife for every failing, neither will the Lord put away his people, nor cast them off, because he is betrothed to them, though they do fail in duties. Again: in this great charter and covenant of grace, the Lord doth proclaim unto all his children, that what they want in performance, he will make up in indulgence. He proclaims this unto them, that he will require no more than he gives; he will give what he requires, and he will accept what he gives. Now, therefore, am I in that covenant of grace? and are there many failings in all my duties? yet if this be true, that the Lord is more moved by my failings to pity me, than to cast me off, then I have no reason for to be discouraged. And thus it is with every child of God; he is in this covenant of grace, and so the privileges, and immunities of all this great charter, belong unto him.

Though there be many failings in a godly man's duty, yet so long as it is a duty, there is somewhat of Christ therein, there is somewhat of God therein. Now God will not cast away his own, because it is mixt with ours, but he will rather pardon ours, and accept ours, because it is mixt with his. The husbandman doth not cast away his wheat, because it is mixt with chaff; he brings it into his barn, and there is a time, when he will separate the chaff from the

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wheat; but he doth not cast away the corn because it is mixt with chaff, yet this grain of wheat hath nothing of the image of the husbandman upon it: but there is never a duty of a godly man, but hath somewhat of the image of Christ upon it, and therefore, I say, he will not cast away his, because it is mixt with ours, but he will rather pardon and accept of ours, because it is mixt with his.*

If our acceptance of duty do not come in by the door of performance, but by another door, and that door is Christ, then a godly man hath no reason to be discouraged, though there be many failings in his performance. Now, all our acceptance of duty comes in by Christ, because our sacrifices are mingled with Christ's perfumes, Rev. viii. 4, "And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." Our prayers go unto God the Father, through the hand of Christ; did our prayers go immediately out of our own hands into the Father's hand, we might have cause to fear, but it goes by the hand of Christ; Christ takes it, and hath it into the presence of God the Father. As it is with your soul, or your body when you die; though your body be crooked or deformed, and your soul defiled, yet when you die, Christ meets your soul, and invests it with glory, and so brings it into the presence of God the Father; so it is with your duty, your duty, it may be, deformed, defiled, or a crooked duty, but Christ meets your duty, and he clothes it with his glory, and so hath it into the presence of God the Father. And thus it is with all the saints and people of God; surely, then, though they have cause to be afflicted, by reason of their failing in duty, yet they have no reason at all why they should be discouraged.

But I have no parts or gifts in duties, therefore I am thus discouraged: some there are, that have great abilities in duty, they pray, and can pray with great abilities, they go

* Quamvis odibilis, detestabilis, et execrabilis fit causa mea in ore meo, nihilominus in ore tuo benedicto, in ore tuo sacratissimo et in labiis tuis, quibus tanta gratia diffusa est, est favorabilis. Parisiens. de Rhetor. Div. cap. xxi.

Est et alia firmitas et confirmatio meæ partis quod tu ipse advocatus est et propitiatio qui es et judex meus et propter hoc non est possibile ut patiaris causam meam periclitari in manibus meis. Apud homines enim non est possibile ut advocatus fidelis et justus permittat periclitari causam cujus patrocinium suscepit. Ibid.

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to a sermon, and can bring away every word, and have a great gift in conference; but as for me, I am a poor creature, who want all these gifts; I have no utterance in conference, I have no abilities in prayer, I have no memory for a sermon, my memory is even as a sieve, good things run out presently; I have no gifts at all, a poor seaman, or tradesman I am, that have no parts, no gifts in duty; and have not I just cause and reason now to be discouraged?

No: for whosoever you are that make this objection, do ye not know, that the glory of the second temple was greater than the first? Solomon, you know, built a great house, and it was a glorious building, much gold and silver in it: the second temple was not so full of gold and silver, and yet it is said of the second temple, that the glory of it was beyond the glory of the first: why? this reason is given, because "The desire of all nations should come into it." That is, Christ, who is indeed "the desire of all nations;" *de facto*, gold and silver is the desire of all nations; but, *de jure*, and by right, the Lord Jesus Christ is "the desire of all nations;" and because that Christ, "the desire of all nations," should come into the second temple, therefore the glory of it was beyond the glory of the first. Now thy soul is the temple of the Holy Ghost; it may be, thou hast not so much gold and silver, not such golden parts and golden gifts as another hath, but if "the desire of all nations," the Lord Jesus Christ, be come into thy soul, hast thou any reason to complain? Thus it is with every child of God, though he hath not those parts and gifts that another hath, yet the Lord Jesus, "the desire of all nations," is come into his temple, into his soul; and therefore, he hath no reason to be discouraged.

If the want of parts and gifts be better for you, then you have no reason to be discouraged for the want of them. Now, you know, that it is better for a man that hath but a little stock, to have a little farm, than to have a great farm and a little stock; a man that hath but a little stock, and a great farm, may for the present brave it out, and converse with company that are in estate beyond him, but at last he will decay and break: better that a man, who hath but a little stock, should have a little farm suitable to his stock. Now God our Father sees, that thou hast a little good, there are some good

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things found in thee; but these good things, this little stock, is not big enough for a great farm of parts and gifts, and because the Lord sees that thy stock of grace is not great enough for such a great farm of parts, therefore, in design of mercy, he hath thus ordered it, that thou shouldest have a less farm of gifts.

If our parts and gifts do not commend our services and duties unto God, then have you no reason to be discouraged for the want of them. Now, so it is, that they do not commend us, nor our services unto God. When you have good meat in a dish, possibly you will lay flowers upon it, cut oranges and lemons, and lay upon the side of the dish; but a wise man knows, that the meat is never the better for those flowers, or for the sugar that lies on the side of the platter; a wise man knows, that if those were wanting, the meat were never the worse. Beloved, God our Father is of infinite wisdom, these parts and gifts are flowers indeed, and they help to cook out a duty, and to make it more acceptable to men, but the Lord, who is wisdom, knows, that the duty is never the better; and he knows, that when these flowers are wanting, the duty is never the worse. "All flesh is grass, and the flower thereof, and it fades away." Parts and gifts are but flesh, and our wise God knows the meat is never the worse, when these flowers are wanting. Yea, if I had all parts and all gifts, that I were able to preach and speak like an angel, and that I were able to cast out devils, yet notwithstanding, if I have not Christ and grace within, my parts and gifts will but sink me deeper into hell. Two men, suppose, do fall into the river, one man hath bags of gold about him, and the other none; he that hath none, makes a shift to swim, and get away; but he that hath the bags of gold about him, sinks by his gold, and he cries out as he sinks, Oh, take away these bags of gold, this gold undoeth me, this gold sinks me! So these golden parts and golden gifts, if a man hath not grace withal, hath not Chirst within, shall but sink him deeper into hell. These commend us not, I say, nor our service unto God, dor doth the want thereof discommend us unto him.

You say and complain, that you have no parts or gifts; but I pray, hath not the Lord recompensed the want of them some other way unto you? Philosophy saith of nature, *Ubi*

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deficit in uno, abundat in altero; Where nature is deficient in one thing, it is abundant in another thing. If a man wants his eyes, he hears the better: and the less he sees, the more he remembers: where nature is wanting in one thing, it is exceeding in another. And as nature, so the God of nature and the God of grace too: it may be you do want a head-memory, but hath not the Lord given you a heart-memory, to remember the sermon as you have occasion to use it? Some have parts and gifts, and they want plainness and openness of heart for God; some again have a plain heart, and they want gifts and parts. It is said of Jacob, that "he prevailed with God in prayer, and he was a plain man." Mark how the Holy Ghost doth put these two together, that that man should be the prevailing man with God in prayer who was the plain man: and that man that was the plain man, should be the prevailing man in prayer; a plain man, but prevailing with God. Well, then, though thou art but a plain person, and hast no parts or gifts as others have, yet thou mayest prevail with God, and thy name may be called Israel, prevailing with the Lord. When God denies one, he gives another mercy. Thus it is with all the saints and people of God, and a godly, gracious man may say thus, Well, though I have not great parts and gifts, yet, blessed be the Lord, I have a plain and an open heart for God: and if the Lord hath done thus much for you, and recompensed you in another way, have you any reason then to be discouraged for want of parts and gifts in duties? Certainly you have not.

Oh, but yet, this is not the matter of my discouragement, I am not discouraged for want of parts or gifts in duty, but I want the grace and the holiness of duty, I want the grace and the holiness of prayer: I go to prayer and duty, but the Lord knows, with a dull, dead and a straitened heart; I think, verily, that there is not a more rocky, stony, flinty heart in the world than mine; I offer myself to God sometimes in prayer, but when I come at it, I am not able to speak a word, my heart is so shut up and straitened; and have I not cause and reason now to be discouraged? Is not this matter of just discouragement?

No: for pearls sometimes grow upon rocks; and possibly

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there may be some pearl of grace growing upon that rocky heart of thine. Yet further—

You say, that you are straitened in duty; but are you satisfied and contented with that condition? or if you had enlargement in duty, would you be satisfied therein? No, I am not satisfied with my straitened condition; and the truth is, though I had never so much enlargement, enlargement alone would never satisfy my soul; but if I had more affection, I would give it up to God, yea, if I had a sea of affection, I would pour it out before the Lord, and if I had prayers, and tears, and enlargements, like the sands upon the sea-shore, I would offer them all up to God. Well, and is not this to be enlarged towards God? A poor man that hath never a penny in his purse, sees another, or many others in want, but he hath nothing to relieve them with; yet, saith he, if I had wherewithal, I would relieve all these men, I would clothe them all, I would feed them all: is not this man's heart enlarged now towards the poor, though he hath not a penny to help them with? So in your case; for the present, thy affection is poor, and thou art straitened, but thou sayest, if I had a sea of affection, I would give it all to God; and if I had prayers like the sand upon the sea-shore, I would give them all to God; is not this to be enlarged towards God? God doth give by denying sometimes, and thus he hath dealt by you.

If your condition herein be no other than the conditions of the saints and people of God, then you have no just cause and reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now in Psalm lxxvii. 3, 4, the Psalmist saith there, "I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed: Lord, (saith he at the 4th verse,) thou holdest mine eyes watching, I am so troubled that I cannot speak." I cannot pray; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. A mother hears her child cry, and saith she, now doth this child cry for the breast, yet the child speaks not a word, but the mother knows the meaning of the child's crying, and the language of it: and doth a mother know the language of her child's crying, and doth not God our Father know the language of his child's cry, that cannot speak unto him? The beggar that follows you for an alms, is a beggar,

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though he be dumb and cannot speak; and you say, Send him away with some gift, for he follows us. So here, though your heart be shut up in duty, yet if you can follow God, he looks upon you as a beggar at the throne of grace, and in due time he will serve you, and send you away with comfort.

You would fain have enlargements, and workings of the heart in prayer: but what would you do with those enlargements? Would you shew your enlargements, your excellencies, your graces to God, when you come to duty? A beggar you know, if he have any excellent thing, as gold, or silver, he hides that, and he shews his wounds, he shews his sores: if you mean to give him a penny, and ask him if he have any money, I have twopence, or threepence Sir, saith he, or a penny; but he hides his excellency, and he lays open his wounds; and if he can but open his sores before you, he thinks he doth beg effectually. Beloved, we all go to God in prayer, *in forma pauperis*, every man sues in this court in the form of a beggar. If thy heart then be straitened, if thy heart be hard, and if thy spirit be dull in duty, you may go to God and open your sores, and wounds before him; you may go and say, Lord, what an hard heart have I, and what a dull and straitened spirit have I! This rather becomes a beggar, and you must come as a beggar, when you come before him; yet you must know that neither your poverty, nor your riches; neither your straitenings in duty, nor your enlargements, do make any alteration in the mind and will of God. Indeed, God seems to deal by us sometimes as a father doth by his little child; he holds a piece of gold or silver in his hand, and saith the father, if you can get this out of my hand you shall have it; so the child strives and pulls, and works, and then the father opens his hand by degrees, first one finger, then another, and then another, and at last his whole hand; and the child thinks he hath got the money by his own strength and labour, whereas the father intended to give it him, but in that way. So here, God intends to give us a mercy in the way of prayer, and he sets us a praying for it, and we think we obtain it by the strength of our own prayer, as if we did move, and change the will of God by our duty; but all the enlargements in the world, make no alteration in the will of God; he is unmoveable, unchangea-

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ble, and the same for ever; but he will give out his blessings in a way of prayer, therefore it is our duty to pray, yet we must not be discouraged though we cannot pray as we would.*

It is usual with the Lord to restrain prayer, before he doth give enlargement, and to make a man speechless before he openeth his mouth: Luke i. we read so of Zacharias, a gracious and holy man, at the 67th verse, it is said of him, that "he was filled with the Holy Ghost and he prophesied." Yet if you look into the former part of the chapter, you shall find, that before he was thus filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, he was dumb, and stricken with dumbness, verse 20th, saith the angel to him, "And behold thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak:" so he continued dumb, before he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied. It may be, here is a further mystery in this, for Zacharias was a levitical and a legal priest; and our Lord and Saviour Christ being to come into the world immediately, who knows but that Zacharias was thus stricken with dumbness, to shew, that the Lord will silence all our legal performances, before he will enlarge us with the enlargements of Christ, and of the gospel? This is God's usual way with his people. It may be thou hast gone on in duty in a legal manner, and now thou art stricken with dumbness; yet if God have a design to discover more of Christ to thy soul: and to enlarge thee with the enlargements of the Holy Ghost, have you any cause to complain?*

As for the dulness of your heart in duty and prayer, though dulness be an ill sin, yet the sense thereof is a good sign: as the thistle is a good sign of a fat ground, though it be an ill weed: so the sense of your dulness is a good sign, though it it be an ill weed: for it argues that you are used to private duties: for dulness in private, and pride in public duties is the temptation. Only here remember three things. 1. That

* Etsi non sit possibi le per ea moveri immobilem et per omniaque immutabilem Deum, potentia enim mihi videatur esse ad movendum ipsum recitantem vel meditantem ipso ad movendum inquam et preparandum ad gratiam devotionis et gratitudinis et largitatis et beneficentiæ incogitabilis Dei.—Parisiens. cap. 22. de Rhetor. Div.

* Quando oramus, non ideo oramus ut per hoc divinam dispositionem immutemus, sed ut impetremus id quod Deus disposuit sanctorum oratio nobis impetrandum.—Tostat. Mat. 6.

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you do not measure or judge of your everlasting condition, by your present affection. 2. That you do not forbear duty, because of your dulness in it; because duty is a great remedy against it, and whither should a dead soul go, but to the living God? 3. That one great cause of your dulness, is your doubting, and discouragement; and therefore, no reason that you should be discouraged because of it, lest you augment the same.

What is prayer, and the nature of it? Prayer is the pouring out of the soul to God; not the pouring out of words, nor the pouring out of expressions; but the pouring out of the soul to God. Words, many times, and expressions, are a great way off from the soul; but sighs and groans are next the soul, and have more of the soul in them, than words and expressions many times have: now thou complainest, that thy heart is straitened and dead and dull; but when you are so straitened in prayer, do ye not at that time pour out sighs and groans after prayer, saying, Oh, what freedom once I had, O Lord, that I might have the like freedom again? And whereas you say now, that your heart is hardened in duty, consider whether there be not a great mistake about hardness and softness of heart; *Durum est quod tactui non cedit molle cedit;* A hard thing doth not yield to the touch, but a soft thing doth. Wax yields when it is touched, because it is soft; and wool yields when it is touched, because it is soft, but an hard thing yields not. And upon this account, it is said of Pharoah, that his heart was hard, why? because he did not yield to God; he had not a yielding disposition. Now there is many a poor soul complains that his heart is hard, and yet, notwithstanding, he hath a yielding disposition to every truth, a yielding disposition to every affliction and dispensation of God. Wherefore dost thou complain, and say, Oh, my heart is very hard? yet if at this time thou hast a yielding disposition to yield to every truth of God, and to yield to every touch of the Lord's hand, know from the Lord, that here is a soft heart; be not mistaken; but many are mistaken, and because they are mistaken herein, and it is but a mistake, therefore they have no reason for to be discouraged.

But I do not only want enlargement and softenings of heart in duty, but I am oppressed and filled with distractions,

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my heart is not only dull and dead and straitened, but I feel many positive evils; as the leaves of a tree are eaten up with caterpillars, so I may say, my duties are eaten up with distractions, I never go to duty, but, the Lord knows, a world of distractions comes in upon me, and have I not just cause and reason to be discouraged now?

Surely this is a great evil, for as one saith well, *Tantum temporis oras quantum attendis*; so much time you pray, as you do attend in prayer; and upon this account, if the Lord should abstract all the outgoings of our souls in duty, and all our distractions from our prayers, oh, how little of prayer would be left many times. It were an incivility, you will say, when a petitioner hath gotten the king's ear, for the poor petitioner then to turn his back upon the king: and what an evil must it needs be, when a poor soul hath gotten the ear of God, then to turn the back by way of distractions upon the Lord, who comes down to hear his prayer. We used to say, When the candle burns, the mouse bites not, or the mouse nibbles not; when the candle doth not burn, then the mouse eats the candle; but when the candle burns, the mouse doth not bite the same. And so long as a man's heart is warm and inflamed in prayer, he is freed from distractions; but when a man's heart is cold in prayer, then come these ill distractions. So that certainly, there is a great deal of evil indeed in these distractions. Yet there is no reason for discouragement. For—

What rock is there so firm or fast, but hath some seams of dirt upon it? And what soul is there so firm and fast and immoveable in duty, but hath some seams of dirt or distractions growing upon it? Abraham, the father of the faithful, had birds coming down upon his sacrifice; and what child of Abraham is there, but hath these foul birds, unclean birds of distraction, one time or other coming down upon his sacrifice?

If that these distractions shall not hurt the servants of God, nor their sacrifices, neither them nor their duties, then they have no reason to be discouraged under them, though to be humbled for them. Now it is a true rule, *non nocet, quod non placet*; that which doth not please doth not hurt. These distractions in duty do not please the saints, they lie under them as a heavy burden, they do not please them,

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therefore they shall not hurt them. You know what the Psalmist saith, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer," Psalm lxvi. 18. Distraction in prayer is a great iniquity; if I regard this iniquity in my prayer, the Lord will not hear my prayer. But when may a man be said to regard iniquity? You know, that if you regard a man that comes to your house, you run and meet him at the door, you bid him welcome, have him in, and set a stool for him, and you give him entertainment: but if you bid the man begone, saying, I will have nothing to do with you, you are my burden, I pray begone; then you do not regard this man. Thus it is with the saints and people of the Lord, distractions press in upon their prayer and duty; but dost thou fetch a stool, dost thou give entertainment, and dost thou bid welcome to these distractions? No; the Lord knows, I bid them begone; the Lord knows, they are my burden; then certainly, as that is true, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer;" so on the contrary, if I do not regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will hear my prayer. A man doth sometimes open a door for one of worth, and others press and crowd in with him, and if the master say to his servant, Why did you let all these men in? he answers, Sir, I did not open the door for these, but for another, and these did press and crowd in upon me, and I could not hinder; then is the master satisfied, and the servant excused. So in this case it is, and that often, with the people of God; Christ stands at their door and knocks, they run to meet with him in prayer, and by prayer they open the door of their heart to him; but then distractions press and crowd in upon them, yet they can say in truth, Lord, I never opened my door for these, but do desire that these, and all these, may be put out again. What, then, do you not think that God will be satisfied with this answer of uprightness? Surely he will, and therefore, though these distractions do crowd in upon you, here is matter of affliction, but not of discouragement.

If these distractions in duties do move the Lord to pity, then thou hast no reason to be quite discouraged, though humbled under these distractions. Ye know how it is with a loving father; a father hath a son, whom he loves dearly, this child of his is crazy-brained, but he hath his *Lucida*

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intervalla, and he will speak very good reason sometimes; his father loves to hear this child speak, when he speaks reason; but all on a sudden the child is out; what then? doth his father hate him for that? No; but the bowels of the man yearns, Oh, now my child is out; then the father's heart doth ache over this child whom he takes pleasure in. Thus it is between God and a poor soul, God loves his children dearly, he loves to hear them pray; "Let me hear thy voice, and see thy face (saith Christ), for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is comely," Cant. ii. 14. God loves to hear his children pray, but every foot they are out; in, and then out again; out, and then in again. But what then? Is the Lord moved hereby to destroy his children? No; but now the heart of your Father aches, and now his bowels yearn: shall there be bowels in the heart of an earthly father this way? and shall there not be bowels in the heart of God our heavenly Father this way? Surely there is. Well, therefore, though in regard of thy distractions, thou hast cause for ever to be humbled, yet certainly thou hast no cause to be quite discouraged.

Oh, but this is not my case; for though I am troubled with many distractions, for which I have cause to be humbled, and though my heart be dead and dull and hard in duty, and though I have no parts and gifts in duty, yet this is not the matter of my discouragement especially; but that which discourageth me concerning duty is this: I pray, and pray, and am never the nearer; I have been praying thus long, thus many years, and am never the nearer: I have an undutiful, disobedient child, and I have been praying thus long, and he is never the better; I have been praying for the sense of God's love thus long, and am never the nearer; I have been praying for such and such a spiritual mercy, thus and thus long, and am never the holier: God regards me not, for he answers me not, and have I not just cause and reason for my discouragements now?

No: for—

Though God doth not answer you presently, yet he doth hear you presently:* he heard Moses when he prayed, though he did not grant his prayer; and it is a great mercy that

* Cito semper audit, tardus aliquando respondet.

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God will receive my prayer, though I never do receive the thing that I pray for, and I may yet say, "Father, I thank thee, that thou hearest me always."

It is usual with God's own people and dearest children to say and think sometimes, that the Lord doth not answer their prayer, when the Lord doth. There is a two-fold return or answer of prayer; there is a visible return of prayer, and there is an invisible return of prayer. As it is with the vapours that are drawn upward by the heat of the sun; some there are, that do fall again in great rain and hail, and ye hear and see the returns of those vapours in the day; but sometimes the vapours fall in a dew in the night, and you do not see the return thereof, but you go abroad in the morning, and you find the dew upon the ground, although you did not see when the dew fell. So here, your prayers are drawn up by the heat of God's love in Christ; some return upon you again in the day, visibly; some return in the night invisibly, when you see them not: there is a visible, and there is an invisible return of prayer. What more usual with God's people, than to say, and think, that the Lord doth not hear their prayer, nor make return to them, when indeed he doth, and that visibly unto others also? Luke i. you read of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that they were very righteous; verse 6, "They were both righteous before God." And Zacharias and Elizabeth had no children; but Zacharias prayed for children, for at verse 13, the angel said unto him, "Fear not Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name John." The Lord heard his prayer, and sent an angel to tell him his prayer was heard, but Zacharias doubted thereof, verse 18, "Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Here he doubts, and it was his sin thus to doubt, as you may see by verse 20, "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words." Here plainly now, was a return of prayer, yea, here was a visible return of prayer; and yet Zacharias, though a godly and a holy man, doubted whether the Lord had heard his prayer or no. So that I say, this is no new thing with God's own people and dearest children, to say, and think sometimes,

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that the Lord doth not answer their prayer, when the Lord indeed doth answer, and that visibly too. But—

If the Lord's not hearing, granting and answering your prayers presently, be sometimes matter of great encouragement, then it is not always a matter of discouragement. Now the Lord's not hearing and granting your prayer presently, is sometimes matter of great encouragement. You have divers children at your table, some younger and some elder, some babes and little ones, some grown; when you come to carve out your meat unto them, you carve first to the little ones, and you do not carve first to the greater, for say you, these little ones will cry, and they have no patience to stay, and therefore they shall be first served; but those greater have more wit and more patience, and they will stay. Beloved, thus now it is between God and us: the Lord hath two sorts of children that come to him in prayer, and he intends to serve them both; but he looks upon those that are weak, and serves them first; as for those that are stronger and have more faith and patience, saith the Lord, You are able to stay, I see your faith and patience, and therefore I will serve the little ones first, but as for you, I will serve you last. Thus it was with Abraham, after the Lord had made Abraham a promise of a seed, he made him stay a great while, why? because he saw he had faith to stay. So now, thou hast not presently a return or answer to thy prayer, why? because the Lord, it may be, sees thou hast strength, faith and patience to stay. And is not this rather matter of encouragement than discouragement?

Who ever stayed and waited long upon God, but he had more than he prayed for? Either God answers your prayers presently, or if he do not, he will not only pay you the principal, but he will pay you forbearance money, and you shall have good security, and a pledge for the principal too. The desire is a pledge of the thing desired; prayer is a pledge of the thing prayed for; a waiting heart is a pledge of the thing waited for: and the longer you stay, the more your hearts shall be weaned from the thing prayed for, and the more you shall be taught to wait upon God; and sometimes a waiting frame of heart is a greater mercy than the thing waited for. By this means also, you shall be weaned from your prayer, so as not to rest on it. A child may so

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love the nurse, as to forget the mother; and one may possibly so love duty, as to forget Christ; but by God's delaying to answer, you are weaned from this nurse, and kept from resting on it. Or, it may be, you came to duty with too high esteem of your own performance, and too low esteem of the duty itself: hereby God teacheth you to come to the duty with high esteem of it, and with low esteem of your own doing it. Yea, the longer you stay, the more you shall be humbled, and your self-despising thoughts, because you cannot pray, may please God more than your best prayer. You see, that when a man angles, he throws his line into the water, and there is the hook and the bait, those are heavy; then there is the cork, and that is light; and when the fisher, or angler, sees that the light cork is drawn under water, now the fish bites, saith he, now there is hope, now there is something coming. So, you go to prayer, and there is somewhat heavy and weighty in your spirit; but there is something that is of a corky and light nature in your spirit; the longer you stay, the more your cork shall be drawn under water, that lightness of spirit shall be drawn under water, and so the more you shall be humble and humbled. Thereby you are taught to fan your prayers. There is much chaff amongst the good wheat of our duties, and God's delaying time is our fanning time: when the fish doth not bite, the fisher mends his bait; it may be, saith he, my hook is not well baited. So should you do, when you take nothing by prayer, God's delay calls for your amending.

Yea, by this means you may remember how you delayed the Lord; he spake often to you, and it was long ere you heard him, shall we think it long ere he hears us, when it was so long ere we heard him? It may be you have forgotten your delays of God, but by this forbearance he doth graciously mind you thereof.

Yea, by God's forbearance to answer you, the Lord teacheth you to forbear; God's forbearance doth teach us forbearance; and is that nothing? Let all this be considered, and you will say indeed, here is more matter of encouragement than discouragement.

If you would be discouraged, in case God should always answer your prayer presently, then you have no reason to

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be discouraged, because he doth not answer you presently. But now, if the Lord should always answer thy duty and prayer presently, you would be discouraged; why? because you would say thus, I looked into the scripture, and there I find, that God doth not always answer his children presently; his children have prayed, and then they have waited, and this hath been the way that God hath taken with his children; now God doth not take this way with me, and therefore, I fear I am none of God's children, and so you would be discouraged. Now I say, if you would be discouraged, in case the Lord should always answer your prayer presently, then you have no reason to be discouraged, because he doth not hear you presently: but you would be discouraged in case the Lord should always hear you presently; you would say then, God doth go not the same way with me, that he goes and hath gone with his children. Surely, therefore, you that are the saints and people of God, have no reason for your discouragement in this respect.

Oh, but I fear that God doth not only delay his answer, but that he denies my prayer.

It may be so, for God doth sometimes deny his own people the thing they pray for, "Ye ask and have not (saith James), because ye ask amiss." Yet they were the people of God. Abulensis observes, that God doth sometimes grant a wicked man his petition, and deny a godly man his petition, that he may encourage wicked men to pray, and teach good men not to rest on their prayers.*

Yet if the thing you ask of God be pleasing to him, and he doth still bear up your heart in praying, and depending on him, it argues rather that he delays than denies; for, Psalm x. 17, the preparing of your heart, and the inclining of his ear, go together, and, 1 John iii. 22, the apostle saith, "And whatever we ask we receive of him, because (as a sign thereof) we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight."

Oh, but there lies my grief, for I have not kept his commandments, and God, I fear, is displeased and angry with me.

* Quicquid placet tibi ut petatur a te procul-dubio placet et tibi ut ei id largiaris petenti; presertim si ipsum largiri, tibi cedat ad gloriam, petenti vero expediat ad salutem.—Parisiens. 346.

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Be it so, and did Jonah keep his commandments, when he ran to Tarshish? and was not God angry with him when he threw him into the sea? yet even then he prayed, and the Lord heard his prayer. And did not Christ seem to be displeased and angry with the poor Canaanitish woman, when he said unto her, "It is not meet, to take the children's bread and cast it before dogs?"

Oh, but she did believe; but I fear God will never hear my prayer at all, because there is so much unbelief in my prayer, as there was not in hers.

But was it not so with David? "I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight, nevertheless the Lord heard my prayer," Psalm xxxi. What unbelief was here. "I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight;" nevertheless, the Lord heard his prayer.

Oh, but I am afraid yet, that the Lord will never hear my prayer, or regard my duty, because I am so selfish in it; I come unto God in mine affliction, and my affliction makes me go to prayer, my affliction doth make me pray, I cry by reason of my affliction, and this is selfish.

And did not those seek themselves at first, who came unto Christ for cure?* All true love begins in self-love. The sweetest flower grows on a dirty stalk. And I pray, what think you yet of Jonah? The Lord heard me, saith he, out of hell, and yet I cried, saith he, by reason of mine affliction.

Oh, but I fear the Lord will never hear my prayer, because I was no better prepared, yea, not at all prepared thereunto.

Do you not know how the Lord dealt by Hezekiah? Hezekiah prayed, "The Lord shew mercy to every one that is not prepared, according to the preparation of the sanctuary (and, saith the text), the Lord hearkened and healed the people," 2 Chron. xxx. 18—20. Yea, God can rain without clouds, without preparations.

Oh, but yet, I am afraid the Lord will not hear my prayer, or regard my duty, for I am a man or a woman of great distempers, many passions, and frowardnesses in my life and conversation.

* Omnis amor incipit a seipso.

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But what think ye of Elijah? Elijah prayed that there might be no rain, and there was no rain for three years and a half; and he prayed for rain, and there was rain: and yet, saith the apostle, "He was a man of like passions as we are," James v. 17.

Oh, but I fear, I am afraid the Lord will not regard my prayer, or duty, for I am such a one, or such a one, or such a one.

What an one? what an one art thou? Art thou such a one as beginnest to look towards Christ but yet not fully come off? you know what was said concerning Cornelius, Acts x. 31, "Cornelius, thy prayer is come up before me." Yet he did not begin to look towards Christ. Art thou such a one as the publican was? the publican stood and smote himself upon the breast, and he said, "O Lord, be merciful unto me a sinner." And our Saviour saith, "He went away justified, rather than his fellow." Luke xviii. 13, 14. Or art thou such a one as the poor prodigal? he said to his father, "I am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thine hired servants?" and the father heard him and over-granted his petition. And if all these things be true, what is there that can justly discourage any poor drooping, doubting soul, in regard of duty; shall his want of parts and gifts, or his abundance of distractions? &c. No: for though a godly man have but weak parts or gifts; though his spirit and his heart be dull, dead and straitened; though he labour under many distractions in duty; though the Lord hide his face, and defer an answer to his prayer; though the Lord seem to be angry; though there be much unbelief in his duty; though there be a great deal of selfishness; though his heart be not prepared, according to the preparation of the sanctuary; though he be a man of many passions, and great distempers: yet notwithstanding all this he hath no just cause or warrant to be discouraged: cause there is to be humbled under all these things, but no just cause to be discouraged and cast down.

And if so, then by way of application. What mighty encouragement is here, to every poor drooping heart, to come unto God in duty! though dead, though dull, though straitened, yet to come unto God in duty.

And what a mighty difference is here between a godly, and

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a wicked man! a wicked man goes to prayer, and "his prayer is an abomination to the Lord." And if you look into the viiith of Hosea you shall find at the 13th verse, that the Lord threatens wicked men thus, That when they do come to prayer and to offer a sacrifice to him, that then he will remember their iniquity. At verse 12, "I have written to you the great things of my law, but they are accounted as a strange thing, they sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of my offering, but the Lord accepteth them not; now will I remember their iniquity." Mark the word, Now, now, when? Now when they do come to prayer; now will I remember your iniquity, saith the Lord. I know, saith the Lord, all your carriage in such and such a place, I know your uncleanness, and your adulteries when you were in the dark, when the curtains were drawn about you, and the candle out: I know your carriage at such a tavern, and upon such an ale-bench, how you sat there, and scorned and reviled my children; I know your opposing, scoffing and jeering at those that are godly; I know all this, and now thou comest to prayer, now swearer, now adulterer, now drunkard, now thou comest to duty, now will I remember thine iniquity. Is it not a sad thing, that the Lord should remember a man's sin at the time when he comes to prayer? yet thus the Lord deals with the wicked. But as for the godly and gracious man it is not so with him; when he comes to prayer, though he have many failings in duty, yet the Lord remembers his mercy, then the Lord remembers his loving-kindness, then the Lord remembers his covenant, "for he is ever mindful of his covenant." Oh, what encouragement is here then for every man to become godly, to get into Christ! and what encouragement is here, for the saints and people of God to come to duty! Oh, you that have but a little faith, have you any reason to be discouraged? will you not at last say to your soul, Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou thus discouraged?

But, suppose that I have done foolishly, and have sinned in being discouraged upon all occasions; suppose I have many failings in duty, and the Lord doth not answer my prayer presently: what shall I do, that I may bear up my heart against this discouragement, either in regard of my own failing in duty, or in regard of God's not answering?

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Take heed, that you do not lay the stress and weight of all your comfort upon duty: either the gift of duty, or the grace of duty, or the present answer of it. So much as ye lay the stress, and weight of your comfort upon duty, so much will you be discouraged in case you do either want duty, or an answer to it. When Paul was tempted and buffeted, he prayed thrice: "For this, (saith he,) I besought the Lord thrice," 2 Cor. xii. 8, that is often, and the Lord gave him no other answer than this, "Paul, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." Whereupon Paul saith, "Now therefore will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of the Lord may rest upon me." Hast thou therefore been at prayer? and hast thou prayed thrice or often? and hast thou no answer but this, "My grace is sufficient for thee?" know that thou hast a Paul's answer, and therefore rather glory in this, that the Lord should find thee faithful for to wait upon him, than be discouraged; knowing, that the Lord's strength shall be perfected in thy weakness.

Consider seriously and frequently of this rule—That difficulty doth commend duty: the more difficulties your duties do press through to God, the more acceptable they are to him. The less there is to sweeten your duty to you, the more sweet is your duty to God. It is in our performing of duty, as in the offering of the Jewish sacrifice, in the offering of their sacrifice there were two things, the sacrifice, and the obedience in offering the sacrifice; and the more difficult it was for any poor Jew, by reason of poverty, or the like, to offer this sacrifice, the more and greater was his obedience in offering it; the more difficult in offering, the greater the obedience offered. So also it is in our gospel sacrifices, and in all our duties, there are two things in them; there is the sacrifice, the duty, and there is the obedience in bringing the duty: and the more difficulty in performing the duty, the greater is the obedience to God in the performing of it. Now is it not an hard thing, and very difficult, for a man to pray, and continue praying, when his heart is hardened and his spirit straitened? especially if he be sensible thereof? then he is ready to despond, and say, I can pray no more: and is it not a very hard thing for a man to pray, and persevere in prayer, when he thinks that God doth not regard his

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prayer? then he is apt to say, Why should I pray any longer, for God regards me not: yet, now, if you do pray and perform your duty, your obedience is the more obediential, and the more acceptable; and if you would but think of this rule—Difficulty doth commend duty, and the less you have to sweeten your action the more sweet it is to God; I say, if you would but remember this, it would both encourage you to duty, and keep you from discouragement in it.

And we must all learn to leave the event and success of our spiritual things unto God himself; so shall we never be discouraged in any duty. For the word of the Lord is sure, and God hath spoken it: "Cast thy gift upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee; he will not suffer the righteous to be moved for ever," Psalm lv. You read it thus: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord:" but in the Hebrew, it is, *thy gift;* "Cast thy gift upon the Lord."* That is, saith Schindler, *Quicquid tibi dari donative expelis:* Whatsoever thou dost desire that God should give thee, cast that upon the Lord: thou comest to prayer, and thou prayest for such a mercy, or such a gift, cast that on God, and leave it wholly to him. Oh, but the mercy I pray for is a necessary mercy! Be it so, yet it is to be cast on God. But it is a spiritual gift! I pray for pardon of sin, the sense of God's love, growth in grace, consolation to my poor drooping soul. Be it so, yet thou must cast this on God. Many there are, that can leave the event and the success of their outward things unto God, but to leave the event and success of prayer, and their spiritual things unto God, this they cannot understand, and this they are utterly unacquainted with: but whatever thy gift be, cast it upon the Lord, leave the success and the event of all your spiritual things upon God: what then? "and he will sustain thee, and thou shalt not be moved for ever." Thou art moved for the present, and thy heart is moved, and thou art much discouraged, yet do but try this way, leave the event to God. Go to prayer, go and perform thy duty leav-

* חשלך על—יחוה יחבך.—Hebrew.

מיברך.—Chaldee Paraphrase.

Τὴν μερίμναν.—Septuag.

Projice super Dominum charitatem tuam.=Hierom.

Rab. Salv. Jar.—Abbreviate dictus Rashi vel Rasi משאך (quod etiam pro domo usurpatur משאת המלך 2 Sam. ii. 8). Bibl. Bomb.

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ing the event of that unto God, and the Lord that hath promised will certainly fulfil it, thou shalt be sustained, and though thou art moved for the present, thou shalt not be moved for ever. And thus I have done with the third instance.

SERMON VII.

A LIFTING UP IN THE WANT OF ASSURANCE.

"*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me, &c.*"—Psalm xlii. 11.

IV. SOMETIMES the discouragements of God's people are drawn from the want of their evidence for heaven.

And thus they reason or argue: I am a poor creature, who doth want assurance of the love of God, and of mine own salvation; therefore I am thus discouraged. Indeed, if I had any evidence of an interest in Christ, I should never be discouraged whatever my condition were: but, alas! I want the assurance of God's love, and of eternal life. Should I now die, I do not know whether I should go to heaven or hell, and what would become of my soul to all eternity. Oh I want assurance of my salvation, and therefore I am thus discouraged. Have I not just cause and reason for my discouragements now?

No, no reason yet. It is indeed a great evil and a sore affliction, to want the assurance of God's love and of one's own salvation; yet, notwithstanding, the want of this assurance is no sufficient ground or bottom for your discouragement. I confess it is a great evil and a sore affliction for a man to want assurance; for sin and affliction are twisted together in the want of assurance. As of all blessings those are the greatest, where grace and comfort are joined together; so where sin and affliction are twisted together, of all afflictions they are the most afflictive. And thus it is in the want of assurance: for as in assurance there is something of grace,

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and something of comfort or reward; so in the want of assurance there is somewhat of sin or unbelief, and somewhat of affliction too. Sin and affliction, affliction and sin, are both twisted together in the want of assurance.

The truth is, a man that wants the assurance of God's love, and of his interest in Christ, is neither fit to receive mercy from God, nor to make return of love and praise to God as he should. Not fit to receive mercy as he should, for though he would have Christ come in, yet by unbelief he shuts the door against him, and he makes an evil interpretation of mercies offered unto him. If a mercy or blessing be tendered unto him, he saith, This comes in judgment to me; it is a blessing indeed in itself, but I fear it is a judgment to me. Thus he makes an ill interpretation of blessings, and so is unfit to receive. And he is not fit to make returns of love to God again: assurance returns praise. And therefore saith the text here, O my soul, wait on God, hope in God, "for I shall yet praise him," why? "for he is my God." Praise grows upon assurance. And upon this account, I say, he is neither fit to receive mercy, nor to make return of praise as he should.

Yea further, he that wants assurance of God's love, converseth too much with Satan. As he that hath the assurance of God's love, doth converse with Christ, "the Spirit bearing witness to him that he is the child of God;" so he that doth want assurance, converseth with Satan, and Satan, though falsely, is still bearing witness to his spirit that he is not the child of God. And is it not a misery to be in these converses with Satan, to be under his hellish droppings? David felt one pang of unbelief, and he cried out, and said, "It is too painful for me." Oh, what a pain is it then, to lie bed-rid of an unbelieving heart. You know a chaste and a loving wife, counts it an affliction to her, to be followed with the solicitations of an unworthy person, to suspect and be jealous of her husband's love; for, saith she, he doth therefore follow me with these solicitations, making me to suspect my husband's love, that so he may attain his own filthy desires. So saith a gracious soul, the devil is always following and tempting me to suspect the love of Christ, and he doth therefore do it, that he may attain his mind upon me; for the devil knows well enough, that the more I sus-

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pect Christ's love, the more I shall embrace Satan's love. The truth is, beloved, this want of assurance of God's love, or interest in Christ, is an inlet to many sins and miseries; for first a man doubts of his own salvation, and after he hath continued doubting, then he riseth up unto a full conclusion, saying, Now know I that Christ doth not love me, I did but doubt before, but now I know he doth not love me. And after he is risen to this conclusion, then shortly he riseth higher, and he goes further, thus: If Christ doth not love me now, he will never love me, and if I have not interest in Christ now, after all the preaching I have heard, and ordinances enjoyed, if I have not an interest in Christ now, I shall never have it; and so the longer I live, the more I aggravate my condemnation; therefore as good in hell at first as at the last, and therefore now I will even make away with myself. Oh, what a black chain is here, and the first link is the want of assurance. If you should see a child, a pretty child, lie in the open streets, and none own it, would it not make your bowels yearn within you? Come to the little one, and say, Child, where is thy father? I know not, saith the child. Where is thy mother, child? I know not. Who is thy father? what is thy father's name, child? I know not. Would it not make your heart ache to see such a little one in the streets? But for a poor soul to lie in the streets, as it were, and not know his father, whether God be his Father, or the devil be his father; for a soul to say, I do not know my father, whether God in Christ be my Father, yea or no; this is pitiful indeed. The word father is a sweet word, for it sweetens all our duties; take the word Father out of prayer, and how sour is it? Surely, therefore, it is a sad and sore affliction, to want the assurance of God's love in Christ. But now, although it be a great evil, and a sore affliction for to want this assurance, yet I say, the saints and people of God have no reason to be cast down or discouraged, although they do want the same.

How may that appear?

Thus: if the want of assurance be not the damning unbelief, then a man hath no reason to be quite discouraged, although he do want assurance. Now, though there may be much unbelief bound up in the want of assurance, yet I say, the bare want of assurance, is not that unbelief that shall

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damn ones soul to all eternity, not that unbelief which Christ threatens with damnation. For if you look into John iii. 18, you shall find our Saviour speaking thus: "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." But now, lest any poor soul that would believe and cannot, should be afflicted and troubled at these words, therefore saith our Saviour Christ, in the following words, I will tell you wherein lies the damnableness of unbelief, verse 19, "This is the condemnation (he speaks in relation to the words before), and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved or discovered:" this light is Christ. Now therefore, doest thou hate the light, Christ? and therefore keepest from it, lest thy deeds should be discovered? Or rather on the contrary, doest thou not know there are evil deeds in thy life, and much evil in thy heart? and doest thou not therefore desire to come to Christ, who is the true light that thy deeds may be discovered, and thy sin amended? Then, thou canst not believe as thou wouldest, and though thou doest want assurance, and though thou hast much unbelief in thee, the Lord Jesus Christ hath spoken it, thou shalt never be condemned to all eternity for this want, but the Lord Christ will pardon this unto thee: and therefore certainly upon this account, God's people have no reason for their discouragement.

If there be such an overruling hand of grace, and mercy upon the want of the saint's assurance, as that it shall work to their and to others good; then they have no reason to be quite discouraged, although they do want assurance.

As for their own good: thereby they do gain experience; thereby they come to see the emptiness and nothingness of all their own righteousness. David saith, ye know the scripture, Psalm cxvi., "I said in my haste, all men are liars." The words in the Hebrew may be read, "I said in my shaking;"* "I said in my shaking, all men are liars."

* חפז—Hebrew. Festinavit, celeriter motus fuit, vel cum timore fugit. Εκ τηκης ασει.—Septuag.

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David was shaken by men, and then he saw that men were liars. So, when a man is shaken in his own righteousness, then he sees the emptiness and the lying disposition of it; and, I pray, when is a man's own righteousness more shaken, than when he doth want assurance of God's love? Thereby also, a man comes to get more and stronger assurance of God's love; *Certissimum est, quod certum est post incertitudinem;* that is most certain that is certain after uncertainty: the shaken tree grows the strongest. It is observed of Thomas, that of all the apostles, he cried out, and said, "My Lord and my God." Two *My's*, not one My: My Lord, or My God: but two *My's*, "My Lord, and My God." Two My's, why? Because he had two *No's* before, "Unless I may put my finger into his side, I will not believe." So you read it; but in the original there were two No's, I will not, not believe; a double Not. And as there were two No's of unbelief, so there are two My's of faith. So far as a good man is sunk in unbelief, so far he will rise in faith; so much as a man is shaken by unbelief, and in the want of assurance, so much he will rise unto assurance and be confirmed and steeled in it.

And as for others: a man is never more fit to comfort, to relieve, to satisfy others in their fears, than when he hath been in fears, and doubting himself. It is a good speech that Maldonat hath out of Bernard: *Citius quidem ego qui infirmus sum;* I would rather believe poor doubting Thomas, than confident Peter: I would rather believe poor doubting

במערקי in fuga.—Chaldee Paraphrase.

In stupore meo.—Hierom.

Unde metuebatur suspicio firma sit certitudo.—Bernard.

Apud Gersonem memini me legisse narra junculam, &c. Refert ille se novisse hominem pium pulsatum et vexatum crebris dubitationibus etiam in fidei articulo qui enim ad extremum in tantam lucem veritatis et certitudinis introductus est ut nulla resideret vacillatio in ejus anima neque plus dubitaret de ea re quam de vita sua, quinetiam addit hanc certitudinem non ex nova alicujus ratione aut demonstratione ortum fuisse, sed ex captivatione intellectus atque admirabili quadam Dei illuminatione a montibus æternis.—Davenant. in Colos. cap. 3. p. 160.

ου μη πιστευσω nequaquam; duplex negatio fortius negat.

Fieri non potest ut bene de fide scribat aut recte scripta bene intelligat, qui non spiritum ejusdem urgentibus tribulationibus aliquando gustaverit.—Luther.

Citius quidem ego qui infirmus sum crediderim Thomæ dubitanti et palpanti quam Petro audienti et credenti.—Maldon. in Nov. Test. p. 34.

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Thomas than Peter that never doubted. Thomas having once doubted, knew how to deal with a poor doubting soul. Thus, I say, God doth order the want of assurance of his servants unto their own, and others good: and therefore no reason, that they should be cast down, and quite discouraged, although they do want assurance for the present.

If a man, a gracious man, may have comfort; yea, and live comfortably, although he do want assurance, then he hath no reason to be quite discouraged, in case he want it. Now, though it may seem a paradox to you, yet you shall find a truth in it; I say a man that hath no assurance for the present, may have comfort; yea, he may live comfortably, if things be rightly ordered. For he that hath no assurance, may have hope, and hope is comfortable. He that hath no assurance, may yet rely upon Jesus Christ; and stay his soul upon Christ; and in all reliance there is some comfort. He that hath no assurance, may be justified, and being justified by faith, we have peace with God. He that hath no assurance, may submit unto God's commandments; and saith the Psalmist, "the entrance into thy commandments, giveth light:" and so comfort. "In keeping thy commandments, there is great reward:" and so comfort. "It is a comfortable thing, (saith Solomon) to behold the light:" and in all light there is some comfort. Now God is light, and the free grace and love of God is light, which a man may behold, that hath no assurance. You do sometimes take a great deal of contentment in the reading of a story: I do not mean a scripture story, but in other books, I say, a man sometimes takes a great deal of contentment in reading of a story, although it doth not concern him; for, saith he, although this story doth not concern me, yet I take complacency, and contentment in reading of it, because here I read of the valour of such a man; and of the faithfulness of such a man to his friend; and of the excellent carriages and virtues of men. Now, my beloved, is there no excellency in God himself to content the soul? Is there no faithfulness in God? Is there no love and mercy in God himself? Is not the Lord the God of all consolation, and God of mercy, without relation to my condition? Is there not an ocean of excellent love and grace in God himself? How many sweet stories of love and grace, may you read in this little book of the bible?

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Besides, a man that hath no assurance, now, and then may have some promise thrown into his soul, to uphold him with. When Elijah was by the brook, and could not enjoy the ordinary meat of the land, a raven brought him meat: and whenever was any godly man in such a condition, but he had one raven or other to bring him comfort? Sometimes a temptation is a raven; God makes it so; sometimes a desertion is a raven; sometimes affliction; sometimes a particular word and promise is thrown into his soul; and is there no comfort there? I say, though a man do want assurance for the present, he may live comfortably. Surely therefore a godly man hath no reason for his discouragement, though for the present he doth want assurance?

But I do not only want this settled assurance of God's love, and so the ordinary food of the land; but I have no raven to bring me any comfort: I mean, I have no promise, no particular word to bring in comfort unto my soul, and to uphold me in my dark condition: though I do want a settled assurance, yet if I had a particular word and promise, to uphold my soul, until I had this assurance, I should not be discouraged: but I want this settled assurance, and I have no particular word or promise to uphold my soul with, until it come; and therefore I am thus discouraged: have I not reason now?

I answer, No. For, Christian, what particular word or promise wouldst thou have? Have ye not the whole gospel before you, a bag of golden promises? A father hath two children; and he comes unto one, and gives unto that child a piece of gold, there child, saith he, supply thy want with that; but unto the other child, he saith, here child, I know that thou art in want, and there are bags of silver and gold in my study; take the key of my study, and go in, and take what thou wilt: is not this latter in as good a condition as the former or rather better? Thus it is with the saints; the Lord is pleased to give now and then, a particular word to some of his children; but unto others, he saith rather, here take the key of faith, for faith is the key, and hath a power to unlock all the promises, I give thee faith, and by this faith, I give thee a power to go unto all my promises: is not this latter in as good a condition as the other? Thus it is, I say, with all the servants of God, "Having therefore these promises," saith the apostle, &c. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

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If the promise of grace do belong to you, then you cannot say, I have no word, no promise to uphold me with: now, that the promise of grace doth belong to you, is cleared thus: 1. Your very resting on the promise, makes it to belong to you, and it becomes yours, by your resting on it; but you do or have rested on the promise. 2. If the command doth belong to you, then why not the promise? Doth not the word of commandment belong to you, namely, "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery?" Doth this word of command belong to you? Yea, surely; for the commandment saith, Thou, and thou, and thou shalt not, &c.; and that word *Thou* doth include *Me;* the word of promise hath its *Thou* and *Thee* and *Thy* also. Psalm xxxvii., "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt *thou* dwell in the land, and verily *thou* shalt be fed," verse 3: "Delight *thyself* in the Lord, and he shall give *thee* the desire of *thy* heart," verse 5. And if you put yourself within the compass of the commandment's Thou, God will put you within the compass of the promise's Thou. 3. If you may, and it be your duty to rest on the promise, then it belongs to you: now, you may rest on the promise of grace and holiness for sanctification, and it is your duty so to do, else it were no sin not to rest on the promise: but unbelief, and not resting on the promise, is a sin; only ye must know, that there is a great difference between the promise of consolation and the promise of sanctification. To apply the promise of comfort, without endeavour after holiness, is presumption; but to apply the promise of sanctification, that I may be more holy, is no presumption, but my duty; and if it be your duty to apply and rest on this promise, then it belongs to you.

Oh, but yet, when I go unto the word, or the Scripture, I find, that God's promise still runs upon some condition, and I cannot perform that condition, I do not find that condition in myself; and therefore, I fear, that I may not go unto these promises, and that I have no right to them.

But what if a good and gracious man may apply a conditional promise, although he hath not performed the condition? Pray look into Nehemiah, chapter i. and there you will find, that the Jews being in captivity, Nehemiah goes unto God in prayer, and doth press the promise which

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God made unto the Jews by his servant Moses, verse 8: "Remember, I beseech thee, thy word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter ye abroad among the nations; but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast unto the uttermost parts of the earth, yet will I gather them from thence, and I will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power." The Jews in Babylon were scattered according to the word, but alas, they did not return unto the Lord, and leave their sins, according to the conditions of the promise; yet, notwithstanding, Nehemiah goes unto the Lord, and presseth this promise, and the Lord heard him, and he had acceptance, as ye find in the following chapter.

What if the condition of one promise, be the thing promised in another promise; will ye then fear, that the promise doth not belong to you, because you have not performed the condition of the promise? Now so it is, that the condition of one, is the thing promised in another promise. For example: in one promise, repentance is the condition of the promise, 2 Chron. vi. 37, 38; Joel ii. 15—19. But in another promise, repentance is the thing promised, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "I will take away the heart of stone, and give you an heart of flesh." In one promise, faith and coming to Christ is the condition; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28. But in another promise it is the thing promised, John vi. 47, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me." In one promise, obedience is the condition of it, Isa. i. 19, "If ye consent and obey, ye shall eat the good of the land." In another promise, it is the thing promised, Ezek. 36. 27, "I will put my Spirit into you, and cause ye to walk in my ways." In one promise, perseverance is the condition, Matt. xxiv., "He that continueth to the end shall be saved." But in another promise, it is the thing promised. Psa. i. 3, "His leaf shall not wither;" Ezek. xxxvi., "I will put my fear into your hearts, and ye shall not depart from me." In one scripture of the Old Testament, the coming of the Deliverer is promised to the Jews, upon condition that they

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turn from ungodliness; Isa. lix. 24, "The Redeemer shall come out of Zion, and unto them that turn from ungodliness in Jacob." But in another scripture in the New Testament, turning Jacob from ungodliness is the thing promised; Rom. ii. 26, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and turn ungodliness from Jacob." Now if the condition in one promise, be the thing promised in another promise, will ye fear that the promise doth not belong to you, because ye have not performed the condition?

And, again, what if the condition of the promise be performed for you, better than you could perform it? In the beginning the Lord made a covenant with man, a covenant of works, "Do this and live;" and Adam, the first man, stood as a common person for us all, to perform the condition of doing: and if Adam had performed the condition, we all had performed the condition. *Now* the Lord makes a new covenant of grace with man, and the Lord Jesus Christ is a second Adam, and he stands as a common person, and if he perform the condition, then all his seed do perform the condition. Now the Lord Jesus Christ hath performed the condition for all his seed: although the first Adam did not perform the condition for his seed, yet the second Adam hath performed the condition of the promise and of the covenant for his seed to the full. Now if all these three things be true, namely, that a man may go to the promise, the conditional promise with acceptance, although he hath not performed the condition; that the condition of one promise is the thing promised in another promise; that the Lord Jesus Christ hath performed the condition of the promise for you, better than you can perform it: have ye, then, any reason to be discouraged and to keep off from the promise, because you have not performed the condition? But so it is, that a child of God may go to a conditional promise with acceptance, although he hath not performed the condition; and the condition of one promise is the thing promised in another; and the Lord Jesus, our second Adam, hath performed the condition of all the promises for all his seed: surely, therefore, you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect.

But this is not my case, for I do not only want assurance of God's love, and have no particular promise; but, instead of the promise, I have a threateuing set upon my soul: oh,

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the bitter words of the threatening have soaked into my heart. Time was, heretofore, indeed, that I had a promise; I could say, I had a promise, and I rejoiced in it: but now I have lost my promise, and instead of the promise a threatening is come. Oh, I feel the smart and the anger of the threatening, and have I not just cause and reason to be discouraged now?

No: for if you be drawn to Christ, is it material whether it be done with a cord of flax or a cord of silk? God hath two arms whereby he draws us unto himself; the arm of his love, and the arm of his anger and justice: the arm of his love is put forth in the promise, the arm of his anger and justice is put forth in the threatening; and with both these he doth lift up the fallen sinner. What if God lift you up with his left arm, so you be lifted up! Sometimes he lifts up with the arm of his threatening, that he may carry us in the arm of his promise; for as the law was a schoolmaster to bring to Christ, so the threatening is a schoolmaster to bring us unto the promise: is the threatening therefore come? then is the promise a coming; for the threatening is given forth in order to that.

And if this, which you complain of, may be the condition of the saints, then you have no reason to be discouraged. Now, for the loss of the promise, you know how it was with Joshua: the Lord gave Joshua a gracious promise; "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee: be strong, be not dismayed, be not afraid, be of good courage, for I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee," Josh. i. 6. But the children of Israel were a little discomfited by the men of Ai, and see how Joshua lost the sight of the promise; in Joshua vii. 6, 7, "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face, before the ark of the Lord, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads, and said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content to dwell on the other side Jordan." Oh, what unbelief is here! what discouragement is here! how had he lost the promise! O Lord, saith he, what shall I say, when Israel turn their backs before their enemies: and oh, what shall *we* say, when Joshua turned his back upon the promise! But so it was with Joshua here,

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he had lost the sight of the promise which once he had. And as for the threatening, you know how it was with David; having sinned greatly in the matter of Uriah, the Lord threatens him, "that the sword should never depart from his house;" and the threatening did take hold upon him, and David was under the stroke of the threatening. But was not Joshua godly; and was not David godly? So, then, a godly man may possibly lose the sight of the promise, and have a threatening set on his soul too.

But if a promise, given out by the Lord, shall never be reversed, and a threatening may be repealed; then you have no cause to fear in this respect. Now a threatening is therefore given, that it may not be fulfilled. Jonah knew this so well, that he professeth to the Lord, that therefore he fled to Tarshish, because, saith he, "O Lord, I knew that thou art a merciful God." As if he should say, I knew, O Lord, thou art so merciful a God, that though thou hast threatened Nineveh, yet thou wilt reverse thy threatening. But a promise once given unto a soul, shall never be reversed or repealed. It may rise up to an oath, as sometimes it doth, for when God gives a promise to a soul, and opposition ariseth, if then God gives out the same promise again, it amounts to an oath; "As I live (saith the Lord) I will never reverse this promise that I have made to thee." But a promise once given, shall never be reversed or repealed: Gal. iii. you have the case that is now before you. Saith Paul, at verse 15, "I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereunto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made." And therefore, saith the apostle, the promise shall not be disannulled, although the law came after the promise. But if the promise that the Lord gave to Abraham, was not disannulled by the law, that came four hundred and thirty years after; (verse 17) "wherefore then serves the law?" he tells you, verse 19; "It was added because of transgression." So now, say you, if that the promise that God hath given heretofore, be not disannulled, and made void, by the threatening that follows after, wherefore then was the law or the threatening given unto my soul? It was added because of transgression: God had some transgression of yours to discover unto you, that you did not think of, and therefore the threat-

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ening and the law came after. But the promise is quite out of sight, and I have lost it. And did not the Jews also lose the sight of the promise which was given to Abraham? When the Lord gave the law, and they stood trembling and quaking before Mount Sinai, did not they then lose the sight of the promise that was given to Abraham? So, say I, although thou hast lost the sight of the promise that once thou hadst, and a threatening be come in the room of it, the promise that was once given thee, it may be four hundred and thirty days ago, or many years ago, shall never be disannulled or reversed. And the reason is this: Because God doth not repent in the matter of the gospel. Ye read in Scripture, that God is said sometimes to repent, "It repented the Lord that he made man;" sometimes it is said that the Lord doth not repent, "I am not a man that I should repent:" how are these two reconciled; God doth repent, and God doth not repent? Thus to our present purpose: God repents as to the matter of the threatening, but God never repents as to the matter of the promise: God repents as to the matter of the threatening, and therefore saith the Lord to Jeremiah, "I am weary of my repenting." I have threatened, and threatened, and I am weary of threatening. Here God repented as to the matter of the threatening; but God never repents as to the matter of the promise. And therefore saith the apostle, Rom. xi. 29, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." And the promise is a great gift. So then, as to the matter of the promise, God doth never repent. Wherefore, poor soul, hast thou a promise given thee, may be five years ago, may be ten years ago, may be twenty years ago, and hast thou lost the sight of the promise; and instead of the promise is there a threatening come upon thy soul, that makes thy heart quake and tremble? I here tell thee, from the Lord, the promise that was once given unto thee, though now thou hast lost the sight of it, shall never be repealed or recalled. Oh, what matter of encouragement is here! Is here matter of discouragement? nay, rather, here is matter of great encouragement.

Oh, but yet this is not my case: I do not only want assurance of God's love, but I have assurance of God's displeasure; I do not only want assurance of my salvation, but I have assurance of my damnation: I do not only want the testimony of the Spirit, bearing witness with my spirit that

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I am the child of God; but I have another testimony within my soul, bearing witness to me that I am a reprobate. And have I not cause to be discouraged?

No, not yet; for it may be you look upon the back-side of God's dispensation. If we look upon the face of God's dispensation, we see his love and good pleasure; but if we look on the back-side thereof, we conclude nothing but anger and displeasure. It may be it is so with you in this case. But,

If you find no such testimony of reprobation as you speak of, in all the Scripture; then you have no reason to fear or to be discouraged in this respect. Now search the Scripture, and you shall not find in all the word, any ground for such a testimony of reprobation. We read, indeed, of Francis Spira, notorious for his despair; when his friends came to comfort him, having spake comfortable words unto him, that he said, Why go ye about to comfort me? comfort belongs not to me, for I am a reprobate. Oh, said one of his friends, do not say so, for none are able to say so. Yes, said he, as the elect of God have a Spirit within them, bearing witness that they are the children of God; so reprobates have another spirit, bearing witness with their spirits that they are not the children of God, but the children of Satan: and such a spirit of reprobation have I. But, my beloved, if there be such a spirit or a testimony of reprobation as this is, either it must be from the Spirit of God, or from the spirit of Satan: if from the spirit of Satan, then he is a liar, not to be believed; if it be from the Spirit of God, how doth it suit with the word? for the Spirit of God is called the Comforter; can such a spirit of reprobation come from the Comforter? And if you have such a testimony as this is, either you must have it from the word, or from the Spirit of God alone without the word: if from the word, then from the threatening; for it is not from the promise, nor from the command: if from the threatening, a threatening may be repealed, a threatening may be reversed, as you have heard. And if you have it from the Spirit of the Lord, how can it be that the Spirit should be called a Comforter? Surely therefore, if you have such a spirit of reprobation in your bosom, it is from Satan, and he is a liar. But, my beloved, I will in the appeal to you, whether do you not think that

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there is many a soul now in heaven, that whilst he lived said, I am sure to go to hell? You know that ordinary story of the woman that took a glass in her hand, and throwing it on the ground, said, As sure as this glass breaks I shall be damned; and the glass broke not. Well then, thy condition is not alone, others of God's people may be and have been led in this way of temptation; and therefore no reason why thou shouldest be cast down or discouraged.

But yet this doth not reach my case or condition, for I do not only want the assurance of God's love, and of mine own salvation; but I have wanted assurance this two, this four, this six, this eight, this ten years: and I have continued so long doubting in unbelief, and my heart is so hardened with it, that I am afraid I shall never be healed or saved. Oh, I have sat under such and such precious gospel means, and if ever I should have had assurance of God's love, I should have had it before this. I have sat under many a comfortable sermon, and under the gospel preached many years, and yet have no assurance of my salvation; surely if the Lord would ever have bestowed assurance upon me, I should have had it ere this: but still unbelieving, and still do I want assurance, and my heart hardened under unbelief, and therefore I am thus discouraged. Have I not cause and reason now?

No, not yet, for our evidence for heaven is in God's keeping, our comforts as well as our graces; and our evidence for heaven, as well as our heaven and salvation; and he will bring it forth when we have most need, in a due time, though not in our time. And if you look into Isaiah xlvi, you shall see what a gracious promise the Lord makes unto hard-hearted sinners; an invitation and promise together: verses 12 and 13, "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness, I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation, it shall not tarry." Oh, but I have no righteousness to lay my assurance upon. Well, yet saith the Lord, Never speak of thy righteousness, man, "I will bring near my righteousness." Oh, but my heart is dead and hard and stout. "Then hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, saith God." Oh, but I am far off from righteousness. Be it so, "Yet hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness, I will bring near my

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righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation it shall not tarry."

But that you may have more full satisfaction in this, I shall desire you to consider three or four propositions.

1. Though it be possible for a man to attain to full assurance of God's love, yet he may have saving faith that hath no assurance. Faith and assurance differ; and therefore saith the apostle, "Draw near with full assurance of faith." Assurance of faith comforts, but the reliance of faith saves. It is possible that a man or woman may have such an assurance, as that they never doubted of God's love; but ordinarily, a man never had assurance of his salvation, that never doubted of his salvation. The first step to salvation, is to see that there is no salvation; we must go to heaven by hell gates; and he that is not troubled sometimes with Satan, is possessed by him. I say, ordinarily a man never had assurance of his salvation, that never doubted of his salvation. A man may have true saving faith, that yet hath no assurance of his salvation.* This is the first.

2. As a man may have true saving faith, and yet no assurance, so a man may have strong faith and assurance, yet many doubts, fears, and mistrustings may be left in his soul. It is observed to my hand, that of all the churches, the church of the Thessalonians are most commended for their faith and their graces, "So that they were examples to all that believed," 1 Thess. i. 7. Yet in chap. iii, verse 10, the apostle saith, there was something lacking in their faith: "Night and day praying exceedingly, that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." Something was lacking in their faith, yet they were examples of faith unto all the churches.

3. As a man may have strong faith with assurance, and yet some doubts and fears may be left in the soul still; so a man may have strong faith and assurance, yet for a long time may be deprived of the feeling of it. And therefore whereas the spouse in the Canticles in one place saith, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;" in another place she saith, "I sought him whom my soul loveth, and I found him

* Prima pars salutis est nullam sperare salutem.
Ideo terret nos ira Dei ut ad fiduciam illius nos urgeat.—Luther.

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not: I opened to my Beloved, and he was gone, and my heart failed; I called and he answered not."

4. As a man may have strong faith, and yet for a great time may be deprived of the feeling of it; so it is possible a man may be a godly, gracious man, yet may continue and go on doubting for a long time, yea possibly, he may die doubting also. The godly and the wicked are contrary. Now for the wicked, you shall find that a wicked man may think his condition good, yet it may be very naught; he may have hope and persuasion that he shall go to heaven, and he may die in these persuasions, yet he may go to hell. Rev. iii. ye read thus of the churches of Laodicea, at verse 16, "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth: I would thou wert cold or hot," verse 15. These were very wicked; had these people any thoughts of mercy, or did they think their spiritual condition was good? Read verse 17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked." So that I say, a wicked man may think his condition good, and yet it may be very naught. Yea, daily experience tells us, besides the parable of the foolish virgins, that he may die in these persuasions. So on the contrary, a man may think his condition naught, and go fearing and trembling a long while, yea, even die under these fears, yet his condition may be very good. Consider it rightly, I know indeed, ordinarily, God doth come in with some comfort or other unto a child of God before he dies; but I would be loth to say, and you will be loth to think, that certainly that man goes to hell that doubteth of his salvation, or that dies doubting of his salvation. No, possibly a man may doubt and fear, and doubt long, even die doubting, without a settled assurance of God's love, yet he may go to heaven and be saved for ever. What then, though thou hast stayed long, and hast long wanted assurance, yet God hath not led thee so far as he hath led some, and thy condition is no other than that which may befal the dear servants and children of God.

But, though for the present, you do want assurance of God's love, and of your own salvation: yet if you may conclude by scripture arguments, that you shall have it before

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you die, then have you no reason to be discouraged: now, though this or that particular christian, in a case not ordinary, do die under a cloud, and with much fear and doubting about his everlasting condition: yet there are arguments in scripture, whereby a man may ordinarily know, and conclude, that he shall have peace and assurance before he dies. For example,

He that is content to stay, and go without a mercy, if God will have it so, shall not want it for ever: "For the patient abiding of the meek, shall not be forgotten for ever:" Psalm ix. As the way to have affliction continued, is to be discontented under it, so the way to have it removed, is to be contented with it. There is a faith of expectance, a faith of reliance, and the faith of assurance. The faith of expectance, will rise up into a faith of reliance, and the faith of reliance, to the faith of assurance, there is seldom a maybe faith, but hath a shall-be, and it is at the bottom, if God would make it float.

If the Lord hath wrought wonders for thy soul when thou wert in the wilderness, and in a desert; then certainly, he will bring thee into the land of rest. So he dealt by David, so he dealt by Israel, so he will deal by thee.

If thy heart be upright in the matter of thine assurance, God will certainly give assurance unto thee: for ye know what the Psalmist saith, "The Lord will give grace and glory: and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psalm lxiv. 21. If therefore, I say, thy heart hath been upright in the matter of thine assurance, the Lord will give thee assurance, though for the present thou wantest it. Now I pray, when is a man's heart upright in the matter of his assurance, but when he doth desire assurance of God's love, and of his own salvation rather that he may praise and serve God the more, than for his own comfort? For this look in Psalm ix. and see how David reasons to this purpose, verse 13, 14. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: that I may shew forth all thy praises in the gates of the daughters of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation." Here are three things observable, first, he was in a very low condition, at the gates of death: from the gates of death, saith he, gates of death, that

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is, the power of death: "The gates of hell shall not prevail," that is, the powers of hell shall not prevail; so here, the gates of death, that is, the powers of death. David was under the power of death, at the gates of death, and now in this condition he prays unto the Lord for mercy, that the Lord would lift him up, but why doth he pray so? mark his end. At verse 14. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, consider my trouble." Why? "That I may shew forth thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion." O Lord, bring me from the gates of death, that I may praise thee in the gates of the daughter of Zion, not for my own comfort, Lord, but that I may praise thee. Well, but what inference doth he make of this? see what follows in the latter end of verse 14. "I will, or shall rejoice in thy salvation;" O Lord, my heart hath been upright in this petition, and now I know that thou wilt grant my prayer, I will, I shall rejoice in thy salvation.

When a man can praise God for what he hath, although his condition be very sad; God will give him more, and give him a better condition. If God shew mercy, saith one, or give a blessing, and I praise God, I pay my debt; but if my case be low and sad, and I praise God, then God is pleased to be called my debtor, and he will certainly pay his debt.

If the Lord be the health of your countenance, you shall have the assurance of your salvation in due time, though now you want it. Thus the Psalmist reasons in the text, "Wait on God, or hope in God, for I shall yet praise him," why? "for he is the health or my countenance." But when is God said to be the health of our countenance? when his smiles make us look cheerly, and his frowns make us look sadly; if I look well when God smiles, though all relations frown; and do look ill, when God frowns, though all my relations smile; then is God the health of my countenance. Now I appeal to you, beloved, you that do want assurance, hath it not been thus with you? Do ye not earnestly desire assurance, yet are content to stay, wait, and go without it, if God will have it so? Hath not the Lord shewn wonders for thy soul, when thou hast been in a wildered condition, in preserving and keeping thee from doing evil to thyself; and have not you been upright in the matter of your assurance, saying thus; O Lord, give me assurance of thy

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love, not that I may have comfort only, but that I may be more fit to serve thee: and have ye not praised the Lord, in your sad condition, for what you have: and hath not the Lord been the health of your countenance, so that when the Lord hath smiled upon you, then you have looked well; and when the Lord hath frowned upon you, then you have looked ill? surely you cannot but say, I must not deny these things; I cannot be faithful to mine own soul if I should deny them; yea, Lord, thou knowest, and my soul knows it, that thou hast done wonders for me, when I have been in a low, desert, and bewildered condition. And, O Lord, thou knowest I desire assurance of thy love, not for my own comfort only, but that I may be more fit to praise and serve thee. And, Lord, thou knowest I have praised thee, in some measure, for what I have. Yea, Lord, thou art the health of my countenance: when thou smilest upon me, then I look well; and when thou frownest upon me, then I look ill: I may say in truth, The Lord is the health of my countenance. Well, then, I say unto thee from the Lord, go in peace, and be of good comfort, though thou doest for the present want comfort and assurance of thy salvation, thou shalt have it in due time. And if all these things be true, oh, you that are the people of the Lord, have you any reason to be discouraged? certainly you have not: therefore why should you not check yourselves, as David here, and say, "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?"

Only, by the way, let no man misapply this doctrine, saying, If we should not be discouraged, although we do want assurance, then I will neglect the getting of my assurance. Beloved, ye see into what times we are now fallen, times of war, and rumours of war; times of blood; these are dying times: and is this a time for any of you to want assurance of God's love? When your hay lies abroad in the summer, and you see a shower coming, you say, Cock up, cock up! and I would to God you might not see showers a coming, and yet your evidences for heaven lie at random; wherefore, in the name of the Lord, cock up, cock up: and you that have false assurance—for you have heard that a man may think his condition is good, when it is naught, yea, that he may die so too—look you well into your condition, and consider your condition duly; this is no time to have false assurance: la-

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bour, then, to get true assurance; and you that have assurance, labour to grow up more and more into it, and the riches thereof.

But suppose, for the present, I do want assurance; I confess, indeed, I ought not to be discouraged, although I do want assurance, as I have heard; but it is an hard thing to bear up one's heart against all discouragements, in the want of the assurance of God's love: but suppose I do want it for the present, what shall I now do, that I may bear up against discouragements in this condition?

Some few things by way of direction here, and so I conclude this argument.

Doest thou want assurance of God's love and of thine own salvation? labour more and more for to put to sea, I mean to the sea and ocean of God's love, and the deeps of Christ's merit and satisfaction. When you are at sea in a storm, or stress of weather, you desire sea room, and if ye have sea room enough, ye think all is well: it may be there are some passengers in the vessel or ship, and they say, For the love of God set us ashore, we are not able to ride out this storm; oh, set us upon some land or other: but the skilful mariner saith, Nay, but still keep to sea; if ye come to the shore we are undone, we are all lost creatures. So in this case, the time of the want of your assurance is a storm time, it is a time of great stress upon your soul; and if ye skill not the methods of Christ, you will say, Oh, now set me upon some duty, upon the coast of mine own righteousness, or mine own holiness: but if you have a skill in the way of the gospel, you will rather cry out, and say, O Lord, keep my soul in the ocean of thy free love; sea room, sea room, and all is well enough. Now there is sea room enough in the ocean of God's free love, and of Christ's merits and satisfaction; but if you touch upon your own righteousness, you do but endanger your soul, and sink your own heart into more despairing doubts and fears; stand off, therefore, now, from your own shore, and keep to sea, even that great sea of God's love and Christ's merits.*

* In sola Christi morte totam fiduciam tuam constitue, huic morti te totum committe, hac morte te totum contege eique te totum involve, si Dominus te voluerit judicare, dic Domine, mortem nostri Jesu Christi objicio inter me et te et judicium tuum aliter tecum non contendo ipsius meritum affero pro merito meo

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If you do want assurance, take heed that you do not hearken unto any thing out of an ordinance, contrary unto the comfort which the Lord speaks to you in the time of an ordinance. Ye come to an ordinance, and there the Lord begins to comfort you, so you go away, and ye are satisfied, and your souls are refreshed; but then afterwards, you sit down and parley with Satan, and with your own souls; and ye lose all again, and doubt again, turning God's wine into your own vinegar, and are unsatisfied again. But suppose that a father should give an estate of land unto his child, and make it over to him with the best conveyance that the law can provide; and then this son having laid down his conveyance some where negligently, a cunning lawyer, (that he may get money from him,) should come and write on the back-side of this conveyance, for such and such reasons, this conveyance is naught: should the son do well thereupon to say, my father hath done nothing for me, I have been deceived all this while, my father hath given me nothing; were this fair dealing with his father? and if he should run this course, should he ever have any assurance of his land firm in his own thoughts? Now, so it is with you that are the people of God; the Lord hath given to you a fair inheritance; heaven is your inheritance, the fairest and best inheritance: the Lord hath given it you under hand and seal, and sometimes you think your evidence is clear, and you lay it by, and Satan comes and scribbles on the back of it, and he saith, it is naught; and you believe it, and then you doubt again, and you are unsatisfied again: is this fair dealing with God? Surely no. Wherefore then dost thou want assurance? The way to get it, and the way not to be discouraged in the want of it, is this: take heed that ye never hearken to any thing, out of an ordinance, contrary to the comfort which you have received in an ordinance.

Take heed that you be not discontented with your condi-

quod habere debuissem et heu non habeo. Anselmo in Meditat.

Cavendum est in lucta cum Deo ne fragili fundamento innitaris quod ille facit qui de meritis suis confidit, nam ut ille qui solis meritis suis innititur. Deo auxilio seipsum privat, sic qui de seipso totaliter diffidit et soli gratiæ innititur Dei adjutorium ad se trahit. Parisienis in Lib. de Rhetor. Div.

Propter incertitudinem propriæ justitiæ tutissimum fiduciam totam sola Dei miserecordia reponere. Bellarm. Lib. 5. de Justif. cap. 7.

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tion: discontentment breeds discouragement: but dost thou want the assurance of God's love? Say thus with thine own soul; however it be, yet will I wait on God, when the Lord pleaseth he will give me assurance; I will only labour to be contented with my condition. But if ye be discontented, ye will certainly be discouraged.

If you do want assurance of God's love, and of your own salvation, take heed that you do not say, I shall never be assured; take heed you do not say, I shall never have a promise; take heed you do not say, I shall never be comforted; take heed you do not say, I shall never have the testimony of the Spirit, bearing witness with my spirit, that I am the child of God; do not say thus, I shall never be helped, I am in a sad condition, and I shall never be better; I am in an uncomfortable condition, and I shall never be comforted; I want assurance, and I shall never have assurance. Beloved, this ye cannot say, for who knows what God will do, whose ways are in the deep, and whose foot-steps are not known? You know how it is with a sick person; if the physician come, and tell him, there is hope of life, then his heart dies not; but if the physician saith to him, Sir, you are in a great and dangerous fever, and I would wish you to settle your estate, and look out for comfort for your soul, for the truth is, you will never be recovered; then his heart dies. So here, take a poor soul that wants assurance, if he saith, there is hope that I may be assured, he is not discouraged: but if he saith, I have no assurance, and I shall never have it, then he is quite discouraged; it is this word *never*, that doth discourage: oh, I shall never be encouraged, and I shall never have assurance, and I shall never have the testimony of God's Spirit. Take heed that you do not say, I shall never be assured, that is a temptation; take heed of the word *never*, in this case.

Carry this for a rule with you, and remember it much; that the less assurance you have, the more precious your obedience may be, and the more kindly God may take it at your hands. It is no great matter for a man to write, and to work by the day light, or candle light; but for a man to write, or to work in the dark, is hard. So here, it is no great matter comparatively, for a man to pray, and to work

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spiritually, while he is in the light; but for a poor soul to pray, and to work towards God, and to be obedient, when he is in the dark, and hath no assurance of the love of God, is something: I confess indeed that the more assurance you have, the more full your obedience will be, but the less assurance you have, the more ingenuous may be your obedience; I say, the more full your assurance is, the more full and large your obedience will be; but the less assurance you have, the more ingenuous your obedience may be. Every child will serve his father for his portion, and for his inheritance; but when a child shall doubt of his father's love, yea, when a child shall conclude and say, I know that my father will disinherit me, I know that my father will bestow nothing upon me, yet I will serve him because he is my father; will not all men say, Here is ingenuousness indeed in this child? So between God and you; it is good for a christian to be obedient at all times, and the more assurance you have, the more you are bound to obey; but doth thy soul fear that God will disinherit thee? and yet dost thou say, However it be, I will obey God, for he is my Father; though I cannot see him, yet will I serve him; and though I have no comfort from God, yet will I be obedient to him, for it is my duty, he is my Father? The Lord will take this kindly at thine hands, and what thou wantest in the largeness, shall be made up in the ingenuousness of thine obedience. Wherefore, then, dost thou want assurance of the love of God? Comfort thyself with this, and say within thine own soul, Well, though I do want assurance, I hope, through grace, I am in some measure obedient, and the less assurance I have, the more kindly God takes my obedience at my hand: and therefore why should I be discouraged or cast down? Think, and think often of this rule; and it will help you to be obedient, and bear up your hearts also in the want of assurance.

And thus I have done with the fourth instance.

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SERMON VIII.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF TEMPTATION.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me," &c.—Psalm xlii. 11.

V. SOMETIMES the discouragements of the saints are drawn from their temptations.

And thus they argue with themselves: I am a poor creature, that hath laboured under many temptations, never any so tempted as I have been: these two, three, four, five, six, or many years, that I have lien under these temptations, and no relief comes, no help comes; have I not reason then to be discouraged and cast down?

No; no reason yet: I grant that the least temptations are great afflictions; for the more a man is unfitted by affliction for God's service, either in doing good or receiving good, the worser and more heavy is that affliction to a gracious spirit. Now, though God doth so overrule the temptations of his people, that they receive good thereby, as appeareth afterward, yet the temptation in itself doth indispose a man unto what is good. The more a man is tempted unto what is evil, the more a man is hindered from what is good. It is an affliction to a gracious heart to be conflicting, fighting and combatting with a man: but in temptations, we do combat and conflict immediately with Satan, who is the prince of the air; with principalities and powers; with that evil one, who for his devouring nature is called a lion, for his cruelty is called a dragon, and for his subtlety an old serpent: and in every temptation, a poor soul goes into the field with Satan, and fights a duel with him. "Satan hath (saith Christ to Peter) desired you;" in which duel and combat a man doth not miscarry for this present life barely, but, if he miscarry, he miscarries to all eternity; he dies, is killed and slain to all eternity: oh what a mighty hazard doth a poor soul run in every temptation! The chaste and good woman counts it an affliction to her, so long as she lives, if she be but once violated; if a filthy person meet her in the field, and violate her, though she do not consent unto him; she wrings her

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hands, and saith, I am undone for ever. N. these temptations are the solicitations of an unclean spirit, and what though a man do not consent unto them, yet thereby his soul suffers violence. Oh, saith a gracious soul, what though I do not consent, yet what an infinite misery is it to be thus abused, defiled, and violenced by these temptations! The more any affliction doth seize on soul and body, the greater it is: it is comfort in a family that the wife is well, when the husband is sick; or that the husband is well, when the wife is down: where both are down at once, it is a sad family indeed. So though the soul be afflicted, yet if the body be well; although the body be afflicted, yet if the spirit be well, it is some comfort: but where both are down, the condition is sad: and seldom doth any great temptation befal a man, but soul and body are both down at once; though at first it falls upon the spirit, yet it descends into and fires the body. And therefore saith Paul, "I received a messenger of Satan, a thorn in my flesh, buffetting of me." As in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, though the comforts be poured out upon the soul and spirit, yet they run down upon the body: so in the troubles of temptation, though they seize first upon the inward man, yet they run upon the skirts of the outward man also. And thus you will find it with Job (chap. vii. 1). God had put Job into Satan's hand, only with this reserve, "See that thou spare his life." The devil having the power, first he loads him with outward afflictions, and then with inward temptations: while he was under his outward afflictions, how sweetly did he carry it, blessing the Lord, saying, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be his name;" but when the volley of temptations came, then see what a sad condition the good man was in, how he was all on fire, as if Job could not be found in Job: while he was under these afflictions, he rebuked his wife, for saying, "Curse God, and die;" but now, being under temptations himself, he wisheth to die, and curseth the day of his birth: "My soul chooseth strangling and death rather than my life," Job vii. 15. But had this temptation any influence upon his body too? it seems his heart, and soul, and spirit was much disquieted, for he saith, "Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?" verse 20. But was his body fired with it too? Yes: "When I said, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint;

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then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me with visions." verse 13, 14. As now we find by experience, many poor souls cannot sleep while they are under their temptations; and if you will see the sum and upshot of all, read what he says at verse 20: "I am a burden to myself." And so many now; Why should I live any longer? I am a burden to my family, I am a burden to mine acquaintance, a burden to all my friends, I am a burden to myself; who knows the burden of a poor tempted soul but he that bears it? Heb. xi. 37. Temptations are ranked among the greatest afflictions: "They were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted:" and, in Heb. ii., it is said of our Saviour, that "himself suffered being tempted," yet he sinned not under his temptation. So that there is somewhat of a suffering in every temptation, although one be free from sin. And in Rev. xii. 12, it is said, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath." And wherein is his wrath more seen than in his temptations. Oh, what a sad and woeful condition is it then to lie under temptations! Yet, let me tell you, though there be some suffering in every temptation, and the least temptation is a great affliction, yet the saints and people of God have no reason to be discouraged or cast down, whatever their temptations be.

How may that appear?

Four demonstrations of it.

1. If Satan do therefore tempt the people of God, that he may discourage them; then have they no reason to be discouraged because they are tempted by Satan. I say, if Satan's great design, end and aim, in all the temptations of the saints, be to discourage them; then they have no reason to be discouraged because they are tempted, for then they should gratify Satan, and give him his end. Now Satan doth tempt that he may tempt; he tempts unto one sin, that he may tempt unto another; he tempteth a man to sin against the law, that he may make him sin against the gospel; and what greater sin against the gospel, than unbelieving discouragements? He knows or thinks, such and such a person is gone from his kingdom, and he saith, Though I cannot hinder his salvation, but he will be saved do what I can; yet I will hinder his comfort, and make him

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draw heavily, and if I can but discourage him in his duty, I shall in time make him to cast it off. His great design is to discourage; and therefore whenever any godly man is tempted, he should say, Well, through the grace of Christ, seeing Satan's design is to discourage, my design shall be to bear up my heart and spirit against all discouragements.

2. If God our Father doth pity his children under their temptations, and the more they are tempted by Satan, the more they are pitied by God; then have they no reason to be discouraged, whatever their temptations be. How is it with your own bowels? If you had two children, one that is in your house with you at home, and another that is in Spain or Italy, abroad, exposed to great temptations; is not your pity most towards that child that is abroad, and exposed to most temptations? Your love may be expressed to him that is at home as much another way, but your pitying love is most to him that is abroad.* As in the time of a storm, great rain or hail, if you have one child lie in your bosom, or sitting upon your knee, and another that is abroad in the open fields; though your love in one kind may run out to him that is upon your knee, yet, doth not your pitying love run out more to him that is abroad in the open fields? Thus it is with God, he hath two sorts of children; some that are exposed to more temptations, and some that are exposed to less; though his grace and love may run out more in one kind to them that are less tempted, yet his pitying love runs out most unto those that are most tempted. And upon this account you will find in Scripture, that when God saw any of his children were to go into any sad temptation, he did either immediately before, in or after, more than ordinarily reveal himself unto them. The more you are tempted by Satan, the more you are pitied by God. It matters not whether your temptation be great or small: if less, you have the less pity; if more, you have the more pity. Why then should you be discouraged, although your temptations be never so great?

3. If all the temptations of God's people be overcome and broken, before they do fall on them; then have they no

* Quo gravior incumbit tentatio, eo solet indulgentius agere cum suis Deus.—Brightman Apoc. ii. 49.

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reason to be discouraged or cast down, because they are tempted. Now so it is, Christ was a common person, not only in his death, but in his life; he did act and work and bear as a common person, as our second Adam all along: *Christus non meruit sibi.* Christ did not die for himself, nor obey for himself; but he did die for us, and obey for us, and all his seed were in him, as in a common person. Look whatever evils Christ did bear, those he did bear for us, and we did bear in him, as in our second Adam; and therefore when he was tempted, he stood as a common person in his temptations, and in him all the saints and people of God, who are his seed, were tempted; and in his overcoming they did overcome. For as when the first Adam was tempted, he being a common person, we all were tempted in him; and when he yielded to Satan, we did all yield in him; when he was overcome, we were overcome in him; and when he did eat the forbidden fruit, all his seed did eat in him; and every child of Adam may now say, I did then eat the forbidden fruit: so when Christ was tempted, all his seed were tempted in him; and when he overcame, all his seed overcame in him. And therefore when you read the story of Christ's temptations, ye are not barely to say, Thus and thus Christ resisted for my example: but, in his resisting, I did resist; in his overcoming, I did overcome. For, as I did eat in the first Adam's eating, and yield in the first Adam's yielding; so I did refuse, and resist, and overcome in Christ, the second Adam's refusing, resisting, and overcoming. Thus with all the saints and people of God, who are the seed of the second Adam, Christ hath not only overcome their temptations for them, but in Christ their second Adam they have overcome Satan, and made a spoil of principalities and powers. And therefore why should they be discouraged, whatever their temptations be?

4. If God hath such an overruling hand of grace upon all the temptations of the saints, as that they shall turn to their good; then they have no reason to be cast down, or to be discouraged, because of them. Now God would never suffer his people to be tempted, but that he intendeth to destroy their temptations by their temptations. Look what is the end and issue of an evil, *that* was God's design in suffering that evil to come to pass. And this is the end and

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issue of all the saints' temptations, that thereby they are more enlightened. *Tentatio dat intellectum.* Temptation gives understanding; tempting times are teaching times.

Thereby they are more humbled; "For this cause (saith Paul) I received a messenger of Satan (he speaks it twice) that I might not be exalted."

Thereby they are the more occasioned to live in God and depend on him. "Watch and pray (saith our Saviour) lest ye fall into temptation." Watching doth note our diligence, praying doth note our dependence. And why watch and pray? but, lest ye enter into temptation.

Thereby the grace and power and might of God in Christ is the more discovered, and revealed to them. "My grace is sufficient for thee," saith God to Paul in the time of his temptation; a word which he had not heard before.

Thereby their graces are more increased, as the Israelites were multiplied by being oppressed. *Unus Christianus tentatus mille Christiani.* One tempted Christian is worth a thousand, saith Luther; for as the wind and breath of the bellows, though contrary to the fire, blows up the fire, and increaseth the flame thereof; so, though the breath of temptation be contrary to grace, yet thereby grace is more increased, and raised to a higher flame. When Satan curseth, God blesseth; and when God blesseth, he saith, "Increase and multiply."

Thereby all the saints are made to triumph over Satan. It is a christian's duty, not only to triumph over the world, but over Satan; therefore saith the apostle, "The God of Peace tread down Satan under your feet." Those are words of triumph, and Paul in the name of other christians, triumphs over principalities and powers. How shall a man triumph, if he never have victory; and how shall he have the victory, if he never fights? Therefore God leads his people into the field, that they may fight; but in all this fight, God stands by, Christ stands by, love stands by; and God hath no design but of love upon his children in their temptations.

Yea, upon this account our Saviour saith, that he doth "appoint unto his disciples a kingdom, because they continued with him in his temptations," Luke xxii. And shall his disciples then be down, and be discouraged or complain,

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because they are with him in his temptations? Surely they have no cause, they have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their temptations be.

But I have been tempted long, and long, and long assaulted, yet I have no deliverance.

How long? As long as Christ himself? "He was in all points tempted as we are, sin excepted," Heb. iv. Indeed Satan found nothing in him, no tinder to receive the sparks of his temptations; but do but abate the sin of his temptations, and then in all points he was tempted as we are, even as much and as long: for if you look into Luke iv. 2, you shall find that he was at one time tempted forty days; and then when Satan left him, the text tells us, "He left him for a season," for he was daily tempting of him. And though you have been long assaulted, hath not Satan left you for a season, have you not had some intermissions, some revives, some breathing times? Job complained that he was not suffered to swallow his spittle, he had no breathing time, as he thought. But though your temptations have been long, and very long; yet you have had revives, Satan hath left you for a season. And if that be true, That God hath such an overruling hand of grace upon your temptations, that your very temptations shall turn to your good; that thereby you are more enlightened, humbled, and your grace increased; then the longer you are in this school, the better scholar you shall be, the more enlightened, and the more humbled, and the more gracious: why should you then be discouraged, though your temptations be very long?

But I am tempted many times to doubt of my child-ship, Whether I be the child of God or no?

And was not Christ our Saviour tempted so? There are but three particular temptations mentioned, in all the forty days of Christ's temptation, and two of them run so: "If thou be the Son of God?" Wherein Satan labours to draw a cloud upon Christ's assurance, and to write an *if* upon his child-ship or sonship. Do you think to march through your enemy's country to heaven, and never be at a stand about your condition? Suppose a man should travel through a strange country which was very long, wherein he never was before, and wherein are many cross ways; would you not wonder that he should travel all the way, and never be

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at a stand about his way, never question his way, whether right or wrong? If you be the child of God, you are now from home, and travelling home, warring in a strange country; and do you think it is possible, and would it not be a wonder, that meeting with so many cross ways, you should never be at a stand about your condition, or question your way, whether you be right or no? Give me leave to propound you a parable. Suppose two men: one goes very brave, fares deliciously, is very merry, and full of money, yet hath no lands, no calling, nothing left him, no friends to maintain him, nor any honest way known to bring him in money, and yet he is full of it; the other works hard, fares meanly, goes plainly, and he is oft complaining, I fear I shall want and miscarry, yet he hath a calling, some land, good friends, and some money? Which of these two, think you, doth come most honestly by his money? Will you not all say, the latter? For though he hath but a little, yet he works, hath a lawful calling, ways known for to bring it in. But as for the other, though fine, brave, and looks high, yet he hath nothing to bring it in; I fear he comes not well by it. So spiritually: there are two sorts of people in the world: one that is very confident of his salvation, and full of comfort, yet he prayeth not in private, reads not, meditates not, examineth not his own heart, takes no pains about his soul, but is often spending, keeping ill company, will be sometimes drunk, swear, and be unclean, yet he is very confident he shall go to heaven; the other prays, hears, reads, meditates, walketh with all strictness in his life and conversation, yet he is always doubting and fearing, but through grace he hath some comfort: which of these two, think you, is in the best condition, and comes most honestly by his comfort? Will you not say, surely, the latter? for though he fears, yet he is always doing, working heaven-ward. The other, though confident and full of comforts, hath no good way for to bring them in, and therefore surely his evidence for heaven is stolen, his comforts are all stolen; but as for the other, though he hath but little comfort, yet he comes truly by it. Thus it may be with you; whilst others swaggering it, and braving it out with their comfort, and false confidence, go to hell, and perish everlastingly. It is a sure rule, that God's promise of mercy doth suppose our misery;

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if he promise health, he supposeth our sickness; if he promise grace, it supposeth our sin. Now, though in the times of the Old Testament, God promised much outward blessing; yet in the times of the New Testament, the mercy promised is, to send the Comforter; the Spirit who shall bear witness unto our spirits that we are the children of God. Often our Saviour saith, "I will send the Comforter:" why? but to show that in the times of the gospel, the people of God shall labour under doubtings, and be full of fears about their spiritual estate; and therefore, though you do doubt of your childship, which is your evil, yet your state herein, is no other than what may be the state and condition of God's own people in these gospel times; why therefore should you be discouraged in this respect?

But I do not only doubt of my child-ship, I am not only tempted to doubt whether I be the child of God or no; but I labour under sad and fearful temptations, I am tempted to strange and horrid things, such as I fear to name; I am even tempted to make away myself; tempted with blasphemous thoughts, to doubt whether there be a God or no; whether the Scripture be true; and to say that I have sinned against the Holy Ghost: such and such things I am tempted to, as my very soul and flesh doth tremble at; and have I not just cause and reason now to be discouraged and cast down?

I confess this is sad indeed: I do not read in Scripture, though I read of many sins of the godly, that ever any godly man did make away himself. It is a good speech of Austin: *Sibi auferendo presentem vitam, abnegant futuram;* Men by taking away their present life, deny themselves their future life. But because, saith Mr. Perkins, some have done this, whose lives have been counted honest and good formerly; therefore my sentence is thus: I dare not say they are damned, because of their former life; and I dare not say they are saved, because of their sinful death; yet for the temptation itself, I say, if it do not come to act; as there is no duty which a godly man doth perform, but a wicked man may do the same, yet remain wicked; so there is no temptation which a wicked man may yield unto, but a godly man may be tempted unto, yet remain godly: was not Christ himself tempted by Satan to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple? yet he did it not: only my counsel and advice

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from the Lord is, if any be troubled with such a temptation, be sure you reveal it, and discover it presently; and as for those horrid, blasphemous suggestions which lie so heavy upon your souls, which make your heart and flesh to tremble at the rising of them. Ye have read how it was with the king of Moab, when he could not break through the host of Israel, nor make them cease from following the victory; he presented unto their view a horrid spectacle, sacrificing on the walls his own dear son, and heir to the crown, that so the Israelites, being not able to endure the view of that inhuman sight, might give over the victory. Thus doth Satan do; when he cannot drive a gracious soul out of the field any other way, then he presenteth such horrid, inhuman suggestions to him, that he may scare him from the good ways of God: it is not in our power to hinder Satan from presenting these things to our thoughts. When you come into wicked, ungodly, and profane company, if they will swear. and curse, and blaspheme, you cannot hinder them from speaking, nor yourself from hearing; you may sit down and mourn, saying, Oh, what blasphemy is here! what cursing is here! but do what you can, they will fill your ears with these things. Now Satan, being a spirit, he is able to present these blasphemies to your spirits, and you cannot hinder it: you may cry out and say, Oh, what blasphemy is here! oh what a burden is this to my soul! but he can present them to you whether you will or not; and did he not present these things unto Christ himself? "All these things will I give thee (saith he) if thou wilt fall down and worship me." What greater blasphemy can be imagined, than that the God of heaven and earth, as Christ was, should worship Satan; yet hereunto he did tempt our Lord and Saviour. And if our God doth so order the temptations of his children, as that thereby they are kept from sin, have they any reason to be discouraged now by these horrid temptations? Many a man is kept from other sins. Jerom, Luther, Magdeburgensis and others, relate a story of a certain martyr, that when the enemies could not threaten him out of his religion, they sent a very handsome, fair, and beautiful woman to entice him to folly; and he finding himself to be moved, and his lust begin to work, did bite off his tongue, and spit it in her face, thinking that the pain thereof would keep him from that fleshly lust,

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counting it more ease to combat with pain than with lust, as Austin speaks,* and hereby he was preserved. I do not speak of this fact to commend it, but only to shew that God doth sometimes keep his children from lust by pain. Now in these blasphemous suggestions you find a great deal of pain, and if you were not in these pains, you would be lusting after other evils. God seeth what filthy, vile, lusting hearts you have, and therefore suffers these pains for to come upon you, and so you are kept from lust. Did you never know a man kept from lust by these temptations? yea, did you never know a man converted to God by occasion of these temptations? I have, and I think many, many poor souls that have lived in an ignorant condition a long time, then it pleased God to suffer Satan to throw in these temptations, these horrid temptations, whereby they are so amazed and startled, that thereupon, they looking into their own condition, were converted unto Jesus Christ. The more delights and complacencies a man takes in sin, the more sinful is the sin: the more a man's flesh trembleth, and his soul is burdened under temptation, the less sinful. Now, cannot you say, in truth, Lord, though these be my greatest burdens, yet they are my least delights? Yes. Well, then, be of good comfort, the Lord doth but hereby keep you from other sins, and therefore why should you be discouraged whatever these temptations be? As for the sin against the Holy Ghost; he never sins against the Holy Ghost, that fears he hath sinned against the Holy Ghost.

But these are not my temptations; I praise God I am free from such: but I have other great and strong temptations, and have no strength to resist them. I am a poor, weak person, a weak young man, or a weak young woman, and I fear I shall yield unto my temptations; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not just cause and reason now?

No; for out of weakness we are made strong, and when we are weak, then are we strong in the Lord, saith the apostle Paul. Possibly a man may be weak in regard of years, and yet may be strong in regard of grace, and overcome his temptations. In 1 John ii. 12, "I write unto you little children," saith the apostle John. Children he doth call

* Difficilius est pugnare cum libidine quam cum cruce.

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them all, for he was their father in Christ. And at verse 13, "I write unto you, fathers (saith he), because ye have known him that is from the beginning: I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one: I write unto you, little children (saith he), because you have known the Father:" which, because it is matter of concernment, he repeats again at verse 14: "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning: I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and you have overcome the wicked one." There are three sorts of people in the world; some that are old and aged, some that are children, some that are middle-aged, and are called young men, or young women. The aged think that they have no need to learn, they know as much as the minister can tell them; therefore saith the apostle here, "I write unto you, fathers." Children think that they are not yet to learn, and they have time enough before them; therefore saith he, "I write unto you, children." Young persons think they should mind their business, trades and callings; therefore saith he, "I write unto you, young men." And I pray mark what he speaks, words suitable to all these conditions: old men love antiquities, and therefore, saith he, "I write unto you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning." Children love to have the father's and mother's name in their mouth; and therefore saith he, "I write unto you, children, because ye have known the Father." Young men are strong, and are fit for fighting, and therefore saith he, "I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one." What evil one is that but Satan the tempter? and, of all others, young men are here said to overcome the evil one; of all men and women, young persons do overcome. This time of young men is the overcoming time. And I pray tell me, was David an old man when he slew Goliah? Nay, not thirty years old. Was Joseph an old man when he refused and overcame the temptation of his mistress? Was Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego old persons when they resisted and overcame the temptation of the king, choosing rather to go into the fiery furnace than to yield? Nay, but they are called the three children; and hath not God said, the "young child shall play upon the hole of the asp?" What is the hole of the asp, if temptation be

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not? And if you consider that story of the Israelites' victory, which God gave them against the Amalekites, ye shall find that they never had a more glorious victory; so great, that they set up an altar, and called the name of it, "Jehovah Nissi," the Lord my shield. Yet if you look into Deuteronomy you will find that the Amalekites fell upon them when they were weak and weary at Rephidim, and in this weak and weary time they had this glorious victory. What therefore though you be weak and weary, and now are in the valley of Rephidim; yet thou mayest overcome, and have so glorious a victory, that thou shalt set up an altar, and call the name of it, "Jehovah Nissi," the Lord my shield.

Oh, but I have yielded, and been overcome already in my temptation.

Well, but know you not that it is one thing to be overcome *in prælio*, in the skirmish; and another thing to be overcome *in bello*, in the battle; those who are overcome in the skirmish, may overcome in the battle: and let me tell you this, that you are never quite overcome, so long as you keep your weapon in your hand: when a man lieth down before his enemy, and gives up his weapon, then he is overcome indeed; and when you lie down, and are discouraged, and give all up, saying, I will pray no more, and hear no more, and read no more, all is to no purpose; then are you overcome: but till that be, though you be overcome in the skirmish, you may overcome in the main battle; will you then lie down and be discouraged? or is there any reason why a godly man should be discouraged? No. Surely if this be true, that a man is never quite overcome till he lie down; then, through grace, every godly man should say, I will never give up my weapon: "Why art thou cast down, oh my soul? Still wait on God."

But yet all this reacheth not my case or condition; for I fear that my temptations are not such temptations as are incident unto God's people; as my sin and spot is not the spot of God's people; so that my temptations are not, that they are not such as God's own people do meet withal; and I rather fear it, because that since the time that I have set my face towards heaven, I have met with such temptations as I did never feel before: surely therefore all is not right with me; have I not cause then to be discouraged and cast down?

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No; for, I pray, what are the temptations of God's people, and how do they take them?

1. When a godly man is tempted to any sin; if he fall into it, then he is tempted again with unbelief, to think that all is naught, even all that ever he had done before, tempted to aggravate his sin, and to despair. When a wicked man is tempted to what is evil, if he fall into it, then he is tempted to presume, tempted to excuse his sin, and to think, and say, This is but a slip, or youthful carriage, God is merciful, and the like; and so he is tempted to presume. This usually is the way and manner of Satan with the godly and ungodly.

2. When a godly man is tempted to what is evil; if he fall into it, the devil then tempteth him to think it was no temptation, and to lay all upon himself, saying, I have done foolishly, I will go out and weep bitterly; the devil had no hand here in it, it was all mine own. When a wicked man is tempted to what is evil, if he fall into it, he is then tempted afresh to think it is but a temptation, and I was drawn into it by others, it was not myself, Satan tempted me, or such an one tempted me, the woman that thou gavest me, or the friend that was with me; and so he doth lay it on others. This is usually the way and manner of Satan with the godly and ungodly.

3. When a godly man is tempted to what is evil, he rather startles at the sin than at the burden of it. When a wicked man is tempted to what is evil, he rather startles at the burden and at the punishment than at the evil and sin of it. And this we see clearly in the xxvith of Matthew; our Saviour tells the disciples, at the 21st verse, that one of them should betray him; whereupon they were all of them astonished, and said every one, one by one, "Lord, is it I?" These were good disciples. Judas yet stirs not: but at verse 25, it is said, "Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered, and said, Master, is it I?" Then; When? Look to verse 24, and you shall read that our Saviour speaks of the burden and punishment of his sin: "The Son of Man goes, as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; it had been good for that man if he had not been born." *Then* Judas answered, Is it I, Lord? Then he startled. The true and gracious disciples of Christ startled at the sin, when Christ did but name the sin; but then not

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a word from Judas: but when Christ speaks of the punishment and burden of his sin, then Judas startled, and not a word from them. So that, plainly, a gracious soul startleth at the evil of a temptation more than the burden of it, a wicked man more at the burden than at the evil of it. This is the way of the godly and ungodly in their temptations.

And as for you, poor, tempted, doubting souls, that labour under sad temptations, and think it hath not been with you as with others; have you not even found it thus? Can you not say of a truth, Lord, my soul hath found it thus? For after I have sinned, I have been tempted again, to doubt of my child-ship, and to sad despair; when I have been tempted to sin, and have fallen into it, I have laid all upon myself, and said, it is no temptation, but this is my own corruption; yea, Lord, thou knowest my soul hath been more startled at the evil of the temptation, than at the burden; as for the burden of my temptation, I leave that to thee, take it off when thou wilt; but oh that my soul were freed from the evil of it. Then be of good comfort, it is no otherwise with you than what may be with God's dear children; your spot is no other than what may be the spot of God's own people.

And whereas you say, I fear that all is not right, because I find such temptations now, since I have looked towards heaven, which I did never feel before:

Do you think that Peter ever did deny Christ before he was converted to Jesus Christ? Did David ever number the people whilst he was in the state of nature? Do you read that the children of Israel wanted water and bread while they were in Egypt, or that they met with so many temptations there as they did after God had appeared mightily to them? Was not Christ tempted after baptized, and heard a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:" did he ever meet with such temptations, before he was so declared to be the beloved Son of God from heaven?

And if God do not measure a godly man by any one action, under any present temptation, nor cast his everlasting condition thereby; then what reason is there why he should be discouraged in this respect? Look into the Scripture, and you shall find, that though God doth chastise his people for their miscarriage, and change of their behaviour under

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their temptation; yet he doth never measure a godly man, or cast his everlasting condition by that. You will not measure milk when it seeths and wallops, but when it is cool: and God will not measure his children by what they are when they wallop in some temptation, but by what they are when they are cool and most themselves. So he did deal with Job, Jeremiah, and Moses, and all his children: indeed he doth not deal so by the wicked, he measures them sometimes by one carriage, and they are cast thereby, that even everlastingly they are cast thereby. Ananias and Sapphira lied but once to the Holy Ghost, that we read of, and Satan had a hand therein; for saith the apostle, "Why hath Satan filled your heart, that you should lie unto the Holy Ghost?" yet they were cast thereby. It was but one act that Saul did when he spared Agag and the fatlings, yet he was cast thereby. It was but one act that Adam did, and Eve did, when they did eat the forbidden fruit, and Satan tempted them to it, yet they were cast thereby, and all mankind lost thereby. Why? Because they were upon a covenant of works. So when men are under a covenant of works, if they miscarry but in one action, though tempted thereto by Satan, yet God may cast them thereby. Now all the wicked, still, are under the covenant of works; and therefore though it he but one act wherein they miscarry, and they be drawn thereunto by Satan, yet God sometimes doth, and justly may cast them thereby unto all eternity. But as for the saints and people of God, they are not under a covenant of works, but of grace, all of them are so; and therefore God deals graciously with them, not measuring them by any one carriage, under one temptation. No, saith the Lord, it is but the time of their temptation, I will not measure this man or woman by what they are now, but as they are when they are cool, most themselves, and out of temptation. Oh what a gracious privilege is this! Who would not labour to get into Christ, to become godly, to be in this covenant of grace! And as for you that are godly, tell me, upon all this account, have you any just cause and reason for your discouragements under your temptations Surely no; whatever your temptations be, yet you have no reason for discouragement.

But what then? What shall I do that I may bear up my heart against all discouragements in this kind, that I may not

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be cast down or discouraged by reason of my temptations? I confess, indeed, that there is no reason why a godly man should be discouraged in this respect; but yet it is a hard thing to bear up against all discouragements in time of temptation: what shall I do in this case, that I may not be discouraged whatever my temptations be?

I will say nothing to your natural temper: if temptations arise from natural causes, then natural means, as physic, are to be used and applied, and people should do well to be persuaded thereunto. But somewhat by way of direction spiritually.

If you would not be discouraged under your temptations, take heed that when you are in temptation, you do not expect too much from any one means of help; over expectation breeds discouragement; disappointment doth breed discouragement: it is not the sadness of your condition, but disappointment that doth cause discouragement. If a man be in debt, and under an arrest; so long as he thinks he hath friends to bail him, or some goods and commodities to make sale of, he is not discouraged; but if he expect much from his friends, and all fail him, and his goods be seized, that he cannot have help come in at that door, nor from any other means, which he expected from, then he is quite discouraged. If a man be in the water, wherein there is danger of drowning; so long as he can get hold of something that will bear him up, he is not discouraged; but if he lay hold of some tuft of grass on the bank side, and that breaks, he falls back again, and is more plunged in the water; and if he be not scared out of all thoughts, he is more discouraged than ever. So here, in temptation, we are as in the water, and in fear of drowning, crying out, We sink, we sink; then we fly to some tuft of grass, some means or other, and if that break or fail, then we are quite discouraged. Would you not, therefore, be dejected or cast down in time of temptation; take heed that you do not lay all your strength upon one tuft of grass; this or that man's counsel; this or that particular means; but say rather, I am now indeed in the deep, and in fear of drowning, and see no means of deliverance; but God's ways are in the deep, and he is infinite, he hath ways and means that I know not of; therefore though I use the means, yet I will

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not rest on them, and though all tufts of grass break, and anchors come home; yet I will wait on God.

If you would not be discouraged in time of temptation, take heed that you do not say of your temptation, this is no temptation. Satan tempts, first unto what is evil, and then he tempts God's people to think that their temptation is no temptation: as long as man thinks it but a temptation, he thinks, it will not last long, it is but a temptation, it will not hold always, and so his heart is in some measure upheld with hope: but when Satan can persuade, that the temptation is no temptation, but a worse matter, then the heart sinks and dies: take heed therefore that you do not say that your temptation is no temptation.

Consider what infinite engagements are upon Jesus Christ, to succour and relieve poor tempted souls; yon can never be discouraged under temptation, so long as you think, how mightily Christ is engaged to help those that are tempted; and engaged he is many ways; engaged by his own temptations; for he was therefore tempted, that he might be able experimentally to succour those that are tempted: engaged he is by promise; for he hath said he will not quench the smoking flax, yea, though it hath more smoke than fire: engaged he is by his interest in you, and his name upon you: engaged he is by his own gracious disposition; when he was upon earth, he cured those that were vexed by Satan: art thou now tempted? thou art now vexed by Satan; Christ is as gracious in heaven as he was on earth: engaged he is by office; for saith the apostle, "We have not such an High-Priest, as cannot be touched with our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, that he might succour those that are tempted;" he is our great High-Priest. When the man-slayer was pursued by the avenger of blood, if the man-slayer fled unto a city of refuge, he was safe there: where he was to stay till the death of the high-priest; and when the high-priest died, then he was set at liberty. The Lord Jesus Christ is our High-Priest; by whose death we are set at liberty; and by whose life we are all preserved: it is his office to succour poor tempted souls, pursued by avengers of blood: and if a good man be faithful in his office, much more will Christ, by whom all other men are faithful. Yea, God our Father hath erected

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an office for the succouring of poor tempted souls, and Jesus Christ hath this office; whenever therefore you are tempted, and fear you shall miscarry under your temptation, then remember Christ, and say, Oh! but the Lord Jesus is in office; he is bound to succour poor tempted souls, and such a one am I; he is engaged by his own temptation; he is engaged by promise; he is engaged by his interest in me, and his name upon me; he is engaged by his own disposition; he is engaged by his office, and therefore though I be tempted unto what is evil, yet, avoid, Satan, for I shall be delivered; I am tempted, but I shall be delivered, for the Lord Jesus Christ is engaged for my deliverance. Do but think of Christ's engagement, and you will never be discouraged, whatever your temptations be.

Think not to comfort or relieve yourself in temptation, with mere philosophical or moral reasons, for the disease of temptation is stronger than that physic; temptations answered by reason will return again, but temptations dipt in the blood of Christ will return no more, or not with such violence and success. Ye see how it is with a candle that is blown out, it is easily lighted again, but if you put it into water, then it is more hard to light. So, temptations blown out with resolutions and moral reasons do easily return, but quenched in Christ's blood do not so. Christ is an universal good, reason can hold forth but a particular good; now there is that in an universal good which will answer unto all your ills; but as for moral reasons, the tempter will say to them, Christ we know, and the promise we know, but who are ye? It is God himself, saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 1. "Who comforteth us in all our tribulations." Are we in the dark? Christ only can light the candle.

Be not unwilling to advise with those that have trodden the way of temptation, though they be weaker than yourself. Christ was stronger than any angel, yet in the time of his agony, the angels came and comforted him. Possibly a stronger may be comforted and strengthened by a weak hand in the time of an agony; and temptation-time is agony-time. Are you therefore tempted and in the dark? Speak with those children of light that have gone through this dark entry of temptation. Who knows, but that God may speak that comfort to you by a weaker hand, which you could never obtain by a stronger.

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But especially speak and converse with the promise; hear what the promise speaketh; the Lord by it saith, that no temptation shall overtake you, "but what is common to men." 1 Cor. x. 13. Oh! say you, never any one was troubled with such temptations as I am, but saith the apostle, say not so, "for no temptation hath overtaken you, but what is common to men." You think that your temptation is extraordinary, and the truth is, that is a second temptation at the back of the first; it is a temptation to think that my temptation is extraordinary, yet say you, Oh! my condition is extraordinary, my affliction extraordinary, and my temptation extraordinary; but, says the apostle, "no temptation hath overtaken you, but what is common to men." You think that you shall never be able to bear your temptation. Oh! say you, I am a poor weak creature, my temptation is strong and great, therefore I shall never be able to bear it. But says the apostle, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." Again, you think that you shall never be rid of this temptation, Oh, say you, I have been tempted thus and thus long, and no deliverance comes, nor any likelihood of deliverance, surely therefore I shall never be delivered: but the apostle saith, "God is faithful who will with the temptation, *make a way for escape.* He will give an outlet, open a door and window, that this smoke may go out. It may be that you see not this door, it may be out of sight; so the door of the ark was in the time of the flood, but when the ark was built, the door was built. So when Satan built this temptation, God did build a door in the sides thereof, and in due time you shall see it. But may I be sure of that, you will say? Yes, as sure as God is faithful, for he hath pawned his faithfulness for the truth of this promise. "But God is faithful," says the apostle, "who will with the temptation, make a way for escape." Oh! that that men would mind the promise more and all the words thereof. They are so hurried sometimes with the temptation, that they cannot hear the promise. But is all this true? Oh, then attend the promise, hear what the promise speaketh.

Consider also what comforts lie behind your temptations; as temptations sometimes lie in ambush behind your performances, so comforts lie in ambush behind your temptations,

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and as the greatest temptations do sometimes follow the highest manifestations of God's love (witness the 3rd and 4th chapters of St. Matthew), so the greatest consolations do sometimes follow the worst temptations. When did the angels minister unto Christ, but when he had made a good dispatch of temptations? So it shall be with you also; for Christ was tempted, that by his example and issue of temptation, he might succour you under your temptation. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and what end the Lord made with him, he had twice as much after the temptation was over as he had before; and if you ride out this storm, assuredly the good angels will come and minister to you, and your consolations shall be doubled unto what ye had before. Wherefore, my brethren, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in this evil day, and having done all to stand; and so much for the fifth instance.

SERMON IX.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DESERTION.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me," &c.—Psalm xlii. 11.

VI. SOMETIMES the discouragements of the saints are taken from their desertions, spiritual desertions.

And this was David's case here, for, saith he, verse 10, "As a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproached me, while they say unto me, Where is thy God?" And verse 9, "I will say unto God, my Rock, why hast thou forgotten me?" And this is the ordinary case of God's children: Oh, saith one, the Lord hath forgotten me, hid his face from me, and hath forsaken my soul, and therefore I am thus discouraged. I do not complain for want or loss of outward mercies and blessings; yea, though all the world should forsake me, I should not be much afflicted, if God and Christ were present with me: but times were, when the candle of the Lord shined upon me, when I walked, as I thought, in the light of his countenance; but now the Lord hath hid

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his face from me, and hath left and forsaken my soul. Have I not just cause and reason to be cast down now, and to be much disquieted?

No. I grant, and it must needs be granted, that it is a most sad thing for a gracious heart to want the face and presence of God and Christ, to be deserted and forsaken by Christ; yea, I do not know any thing, or any affliction, that is so afflictive to a gracious heart, as this: for, take any other affliction, and though it be great, yet it is but a particular affliction, the loss of some particular good, and the putting out of some one candle, or the hiding of some one star; but if Christ hide his face, and God withdraw or hide himself, it is the darkening of the sun, which brings an universal darkness upon the soul; and it embitters all other afflictions, for as the presence of Christ sweetens all other comforts, so the absence, or forsakings of Christ, do embitter all other sufferings, and cut off all our relief and remedy against them. So long as the face of God shines upon a poor soul, he may run to Christ, and relieve and help himself against his affliction. True, my friends forsake me, my relations forsake me, but Christ hath not forsaken me: but if God and Christ forsake, where shall a man relieve or refresh himself in this stormy day? And as those sins are greatest, that cut off our relief against other sins; so those afflictions are greatest, that cut off our relief against other afflictions. Such is this: of all afflictions, it looks the most like a judgment to a gracious soul. "O Lord (saith David), correct me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure," Psalm vi. 1. When God hides his face, and forsakes the soul, he seems to correct in anger and in hot displeasure. Herein a christian doth, as it were, combat with God himself: he fights with men sometimes, and then he is more than a conqueror, because Christ fighteth with him and in him; he fights with Satan, principalities and powers, and then he doth overcome, because Christ is with him: but oh, saith the soul in this desertion, God is mine enemy here I must fight it out hand to hand with divine anger, and what shall I do now, how is it possible that I should now escape? The truth is, this affliction above all others seems to draw a curtain over all our comforts, and to put an end unto all our spiritual joy. What birds sing in the winter time? Some

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may, but ordinarily they no not. If you walk abroad in the winter time, and hear no birds sing, and one say to you, What is the reason of this deep silence? two or three months ago, when we walked in the fields, every wood had its several music; how sweetly did the birds sing then, but now they are all silent: what is the reason? you will easily answer, Aye, then indeed it was summer time, then the sun shone upon them, and so they sang; but now the warming and enlivening beams of the sun are gone, they sing no more. Beloved, the light of God's countenance is our spring, desertion is our winter. Show me that saint that is able to sing in this winter time. I confess it is possible for a man to do it, and some there are. Habakkuk was one that learned this song of faith; but how few are able to sing and rejoice when God hides himself. No, saith the soul, two or three months ago the Lord shined upon me, and then I could sing indeed; but now God and Christ is gone, and so all my songs are gone, and joys are gone, and I fear I shall never see them again, or rejoice in Christ again. It is said of Mary, that when she went to Christ's sepulchre, she wept; and though the angel came to her and said, "Why weepest thou?" yet she continued weeping, the presence of an angel could not comfort her. Why? Oh, saith she, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Would it not grieve a prince to be dispossessed of and to lose his crown; to be made like an ordinary man? This presence of Christ is the crown of a christian; and therefore when God had forsaken the church, as we read in Lam. v., she complained, verse 16, "The crown is fallen from my head." Why? verse 20, "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long a time?" Verse 22. "Thou hast utterly rejected us, thou art very wroth against us." Take away the presence of Christ, and ye set a christian among the ordinary rank of men: and must he not needs be troubled when his crown is thus taken from his head? I have read of a religious woman, that having borne nine children, professed that she had rather endure all the pains of those nine travails at once, than endure the misery of the loss of God's presence. And indeed this affliction of God's forsaking a man, is so great, that if a man feel it not, I even fear it is because he is forsaken indeed. But now,

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though there be never so much gall and wormwood in this cup, yet the children of God have no reason to faint at the drinking of it; no just cause or reason yet to faint, or be discouraged, or cast down.

How may that appear?

1. For the clearing of this truth to you, ye must know, that God, or Christ is said to forsake a man, either in regard of his power, grace or strength, or in regard of the comfortable feelings of his love, either in regard of union or in regard of vision. 1. In regard of union he never forsakes his own people. 2. In regard of his power, grace and atrength, he never forsakes them totally. And, 3. in regard of vision, or comfortable feelings, though he do forsake for a time, yet he will return again. And if all these be true, have they any reason to be much discouraged? For the first, ye know what is said, John xiii. 1, "Those whom he loves, he loves unto the end." As for the second, ye know what he saith also, Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "We are kept by the power of God unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5. And as for the third, hath not the Lord promised, Isaiah liv., that he will return again with advantage? Verse 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee: in a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer," verse 8. Now ye know that friends are not much troubled at such a parting, which is but for a time. It is said of the church of Ephesus, that when Paul took leave of them they wept, "because he said they should see his face no more." The saints cannot say so in regard of Christ; though they see not his face for the present, yet they cannot say, I shall see his face no more, for he will return again, yea, and return with advantage; for though he forsakes for a moment, yet with great mercy, and with everlasting kindness, will the Lord have mercy on them. What then, though you be forsaken for a moment, have you any just cause and reason for your discouragement?

2. If Christ do therefore forsake his people, that he may not forsake them, and hath a design of love, and nothing but of love upon them in his forsaking; then have they no just cause for their discouragements. Now I pray, what is the

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reason why God doth forsake his people for a time, or a moment, hath he any design but love upon them? Doth he not therefore withdraw himself from them, that he might draw them to himself? Doth he not therefore hide his face for a moment, that he may not turn his back upon them for ever? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that they might die unto all the world, and long after heaven, where there is no forsaking? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that they might die unto the way of sense, and learn to live by faith, which is the proper work of this life? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that in this winter of their desertion, the weeds and vermin of their sins may be killed and mortified? Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that he may see their love to him? In time of his presence we have the sense of his love to us; but in the time of his absence, then he seeth, and we ourselves have the sense of our love to him. Doth he not therefore forsake them for a moment, that their very joys and comforts may be more fervent, exalted and enlarged? It is our nature to rejoice most in a comfort, when it is redeemed from the hand of death, and recovered from loss. The wise men, when they saw the lost star again, then they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. Did they not rejoice in the star before? Surely they did, but they rejoiced more, even with exceeding great joy, when they had found the lost star. And this is our nature, we rejoice most in the finding of lost mercies. Now the Lord Christ knows our nature, and therefore that he may raise our joy, our praise, our thankfulness, for his presence, face, and manifestation of his love, he doth sometimes withdraw them. So that in all his withdrawings, he hath a design of love upon our souls: have we any reason then to be much discouraged, though deserted?

3. Though it pleaseth God, to hide his face from his people sometimes, insomuch, as they are in the dark, and in a very dark condition; yet they are never so much in the dark, but that they have light enough to work by: for what day is there in all the year, that is so short, dark, and gloomy, but a man may see to work by? Indeed, sometimes the sun is in the eclipse, sometimes behind a cloud; sometimes it breaks not forth with his golden beams, as at other times: but if the

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sun be up, and it be day, a man hath always light enough to work by. Now the sun is always up with the saints, it is always day with them; though the beams of the Sun of Righteousness do not shine, yet it is always day; they are not children of darkness; they may have a dark day of it, but though it be never so dark, they may find light enough to do the great work which they came into the world for; which is to believe, and trust, and stay themselves on God; this a man may do in the darkest time, when he hath no light: and therefore saith the prophet, "Let him that walks in darkness, and seeth no light, stay himself upon the name of the Lord." What then, though you have not so much light as you would have, to refresh yourselves by: yet if you have light enough to do your Father's work by, and the greatest work of this life is to trust in God, and believe, have you then any reason for your discouragements? Thus it is with all the saints; though they may be in the dark, and the sun shines not out upon them, yet it is always day with them, and they have light enough, when it is darkest, to do their Father's work and business by; and therefore certainly, the saints have no reason to be cast down, and discouraged, although they be much forsaken, deserted, and in the dark.

But Jesus Christ hath not only deserted, forsaken, and withdrawn himself from me, in regard of vision; but I fear also in regard of union: not in regard of comfortable feelings only; but in regard of strength and power: and therefore I am afraid, and discouraged, and have I not cause for it?

No. For a man that is in the dark, is not able to judge of his own grace, or Christ's strength in him: now you are in desertion, therefore in the dark, therefore you are not able to judge of your own grace, and Christ's strength in you; yet if you can judge in this condition, and will deal faithfully with your own souls; is there not as much of Christ's strength, and grace in your lives and conversations, as when ye had that presence which ye mourn after, excepting your enlargement in duties? I confess indeed, that a gracious man in time of desertion, hath not those enlargements, as he had when God's face shined upon him; but setting aside your enlargements, what is there in your conversations

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wanting now, which you had then? and is the very want of enlargement a sufficient reason to say that Christ is gone, and hath forsaken me, not only in regard of vision, but in regard of union, strength, and grace? We read in Canticles v. 5, that when Christ withdraws from the spouse, there is some myrrh left upon the ringles of the door; the spouse ariseth, follows after him, and enquireth for him, saying, "Did you see my Beloved?" She met with the watchmen, they smote her, and she was willing to bear their smiting, that she might hear of Christ; she stands and admireth at the beauty and excellency of her beloved; "White and ruddy, the fairest of ten thousand." Now in this desertion of yours, is there not some myrrh upon the ringles of your heart? Do you not still stand admiring Christ, and his excellencies? Do you not enquire after your Beloved? going to one and to another, saying, "Did you see him whom my soul loveth?" Are you not willing that the watchmen should smite you, so ye may but meet with Christ again? And will ye say then, he is only gone in regard of vision, but in regard of union, power, strength and grace too? Surely you have no reason for it.

But I am not only forsaken and deserted, and want the comfortable feelings, and manifestations of love which I once had, and do now desire to have; but I do find the contrary tokens of God's displeasure, manifestations of his anger: were it only in the withdrawings of love I might bear it; but Christ is angry, God is angry, appears to be mine enemy and have I not reason now to be much discouraged?

No: for if this hath been the condition of the saints before you, why should you fear your state in this respect? Now look into Isaiah lvii, and you shall find that God saith, "I was wroth and smote him;" he did not only hide his face, but he was wroth; yea, he is not only wroth, but he smote his people too, and yet the promise is, "I will restore comfort to him, and to his mourners:" did not Job think, and say that God was angry with him, and become his enemy? and did not Job's friends think that God loved them and was their friend, and his enemy? yet if you look into Job xlii. you find that God was more pleased with Job, for he was fain to pray for them before they could be accepted; and know ye not that it is Christ's usual manner to personate an

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enemy when he intends the most friendship, to seem a stranger when he intends the most communion. It is said that God was angry with Moses, Exod. iv. yet even then he gave him such a promise of mercy as he had not before, ver. 14, 15, and 16. Ye know what David's choice was, "Lord, let me fall into thy hands, and not into the hands of men, for with thee is mercy." It is sometimes a mercy to be immediately chastised by the hand of God our Father. God might turn us over to the hands of men, but if God will take us into his own hand, and chastise with his own hand immediately, there is love in it. If a prince should say to his officers, "my whole kingdom is before you, do right, and execute justice and judgment; but as for such and such a family, if they shall commit any fault, I will chastise them immediately with my own hand, you shall not meddle with them, I will do it myself," would not this argue love? Thus it is with the saints in the time of desertion, then God takes the soul into his own hand, all creatures and officers of his anger stand and meddle not; in other afflictions God turns us over to his officers, but in desertion, there he doth correct immediately; and therefore though he strikes, yet there is love at the bottom, and the more Christ doth sympathize with you in any affliction, the less cause you have to be discouraged. Christ is our sympathizing High-Priest in all our afflictions, but the more we are like to him in any affliction, the more he doth sympathize, and his heart let out the more unto us. Jesus Christ was in desertion himself, and not only forsaken, but, for our sakes, under the wrath and displeasure of God his Father; and therefore when he sees a soul, not only deserted, but under anger and displeasure of God, then he saith, Oh! there is a soul that is in my case, and so he does most commisserate and compassionate that person. Have you then any reason to be discouraged in this respect?

But this is not my case; for I am not only deserted, forsaken, under manifestations of Christ's displeasure; but I have sinned and drawn down this desertion upon my own soul; and therefore now it is that I am thus discouraged, and have I not reason for it?

No, for God doth not always desert and forsake his people for their sins; sometimes he doth, and sometimes he doth

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not. As appears by comparing the iiird and vth chapters of the Canticles. And it may be he doth now withdraw from you, not for your sin; and if there be but a *may be* of it, there is no reason for discouragement. But suppose it be so, look I pray into Isaiah lvii. again, and see what the Lord hath promised to a poor soul in this condition: verse 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Will ye say, the Lord doth not only hide his face from you, but he hath smitten you? So here. Will ye say, oh, but I have sinned, and drawn this desertion upon myself? So here: "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him." Will ye say, oh, but I have sinned on both sides of this desertion: I have sinned before the desertion came, which sin was the cause of it; and I have sinned since: I have been deserted by my frowardness and peevish carriage? So here: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and hid me;" there is sin on the one side: "and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart;" there is sin on the other side of desertion: here is sin on both sides; what then, is there any hope, or comfort, or mercy for a heart in this condition? Yes, saith the Lord, "I will restore comfort unto him, and to his mourners." Oh, but it is not comfort that my soul desires; but I have a foul, filthy, unclean, wicked heart of mine own; oh, that my heart were healed: is there any hope of healing mercy in this condition? Yes, saith the Lord, in the text; "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." Oh, but though I be healed, I shall sin again, and wander from God again: nay, saith the Lord, "But I have seen his ways, and will heal him, and will lead him also." But I see no means or likelihood of all this; how can it be? Yes, very well; for saith the Lord, verse 19th "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace, peace, to him that is afar off; and I will heal him again:" Oh what comfort is here? what an upholding promise is here? Can you read it or think of it, and your heart sink before it?

This is but part of my condition, for I have sinned, Christ hath forsaken me; I have sinned, Christ hath smote me, and he goes on smiting, goes on angry, goes on displeased; I have been deserted a long while, in the dark a long while;

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and I am so far from the light, that it doth even grow darker and darker; my condition being more sad every day than other; every day I am more deserted and my condition worser; have I not reason to be cast down and discouraged now?

No: for when was it worst with the Israelites? They had an ill time of it all the time they were in the land of Egypt, a dark time; but was it not worst with them immediately before their deliverance? Did not the taskmasters then beat them? When was it worst with David? Ill at all times in the wilderness; but was it not worst with him at Ziklag, when he had lost his wives, and his own men took up stones against him? Psalm x, we read that David saith, "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord, and hidest thyself in time of trouble?" hiding is more and worse than standing afar off. When the sun is going down, then it seems to be far off; but when it is hidden, then it is set, and is further off: so saith David, Lord thou art not only afar off, but even out of sight, quite out of sight and art hidden from me; his desertion grew higher and higher: and if you look into Psalm xiii, you find that he speaks to the like purpose; "how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? how long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?" As hiding is more than standing afar off; so it is worse than forgetting: for, as Musculus observes well, forgetting is but *remisso amoris*; a man that loves another may forget him, yet he may love him well; but hiding the face is, *Iræ testimonium* the testimony of anger; and it is as if David should have said: Lord, thou doest not only restrain thy love towards me, but thou doest shew tokens of thy displeasure, and anger, and thy displeasure riseth. So Psalm xxii, ver. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not," ver. 2. How can this be, saith Augustine, that God should forsake Christ in his sufferings, for these words are spoken of Christ, when God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself? Yes, very well, saith he, for Christ was a common person, stood in our stead, and place, and so personating of us, he saith, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" Yea, and Lord, thou hast not only forsaken me, but my desertion riseth yet higher; for, "I cry in the day-time and thou hearest not." But you may see this abundantly made out in Job xxx. 20, "I cry unto thee, and thou dost

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not hear me; I stand up, and thou regardest me not, thou art become cruel to me; with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me." Ver. 27, "My bowels boiled, and rest not, the days of affliction prevented me: I went mourning without the sun; I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls." And ver. 26, "When I looked for good, then evil came to me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness." Thus you see that it may be the condition of God's own people, to be worser and worser; and their condition more and more dark in their own apprehensions; and therefore no reason why you should be discouraged in this respect.

But my desertions have been so long, that I fear it will never be otherwise with me; God is now gone, Christ is now gone, comfort gone, and I fear now that Christ will never return again; and this is that which even sinks my soul: I confess the least desertion and forsaking is a great evil: but though I were under the greatest cloud in the world, I should bear it, if I did but think that Christ would return again: but I find in scripture, that there is a final rejection mentioned, as well as a present desertion: the saints and people of God, are it may be deserted for a time; but they are never rejected: David was deserted, but he was not rejected; Saul was rejected, finally rejected; and I fear that I am not only deserted for the present, but finally rejected, that God hath even cast me off; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason for it now?

No, not yet; for first, it is usual with saints in affliction, to think that God is gone, and will return no more: there is no affliction which the people of God meet withal, and they meet with many, wherein they are so apt, and prone, and ready to write a *never* upon their condition, as in this case of spiritual desertion. If a godly, gracious man fall sick, he doth not say presently, or conclude, I shall never recover again; if he be persecuted by enemies, he doth not conclude presently that he shall never be delivered: but if God hide his face at any time, then comes out this *never*, I shall *never* be delivered, I shall never be restored to comfort again. So Psalm 13 "How long wilt thou hide thy face? what, for ever!" So Psalm 77, "Will the Lord cast off for ever?" ver. 7, "Will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean gone for

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ever? and doth his promise fail for evermore?" This is the proper place and ground, where this unbelieving conclusion grows; when they are in this condition, they rise to a *never*; oh, it will never be otherwise with me; Christ is gone, mercy is gone, and I shall never see the face of God again. This is usual, and most usual with the saints in this condition.

Therefore you shall observe, that when God doth give out a promise to his children in this condition; the promise is so cast and laid, as may most obviate, and face this objection, and take off our *never*. Psalm ix. 18. "The needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not fail for ever." So Psalm ciii. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, (verse 8.) slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy: he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." So Isaiah lvii. 16, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth." God seeth that in this condition, his people are apt to write a *never* upon their condition; and therefore that he may condescend unto their infirmities, when he comes to give out a promise, he doth not barely promise mercy; but he puts in the *ever* into his promise, that he may take off our unbelieving *never*.

If it be made out unto you by Scripture, that God or Christ is not so gone, but that he will return again; then will you not say, surely I have no reason for my discouragements?

Now for the clearing of that, give me leave to propound several questions to you.

1. Did ye ever read in all the word of God, that a man was finally rejected and forsaken, but an evil spirit from the Lord did seize upon him presently? Saul was finally rejected, and the text saith, that an evil spirit from the Lord seized upon him; and what is the evil spirit, but an envious spirit? The envious man in the gospel, is the evil man; and this evil spirit seized on Saul as soon as God did forsake him; for an envious, malicious, persecuting spirit came upon him against David, and the saints with him. So when God forsakes a man finally, a persecuting spirit enters him. When God forsakes his own children, Satan, that evil spirit comes to them; for when God goes, Satan comes: but there is much difference between a tempting Satan, and a persecu-

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ting Satan: tempting Satan comes to the saints, when they are deserted; but a persecuting Satan doth not enter into them. But did ye ever know, or read of any finally rejected, but an evil, persecuting spirit seized on them from the Lord?

2. Do you read of any in all the word whom God did finally forsake, that could not find in their hearts to forsake God and his ways? God doth not forsake us, unless we forsake him; "Ye have rejected me, saith the Lord, and therefore I have rejected you." Possibly a good man may want this sense of God's love; but then he hath the sense of his own sins: possibly he may want the feeling of his own perfection, which is divine love; but then he hath the feeling of his own imperfection. But I say, Did you ever read in all the word, of any man finally forsaken, that could not find in his heart to forsake God, and the good ways of God?

3. Did ye ever read in all the word, that God did ever forsake a man, who was sensible of his forsaking, and complained thereof, simply for itself. We read of Saul indeed, that when he was forsaken, he cried out, and said, "God hath forsaken me, the Philistines are upon me;" God hath forsaken me, but it is in order to an outward evil; the Philistines are upon me. But the saints when they are forsaken, are sensible of this evil, simply for itself, and think the time long and tedious, when they are so forsaken: "O Lord, (saith David,) how long wilt thou hide thy face from me: what, for ever?" But I say, was ever man forsaken, was ever man quite forsaken of God, that was sensible of this evil, only and simply for itself?

4. Did you ever read in all the word of God, that ever a man was finally forsaken, who was tender in the point of sin, who sat mourning after God? We read in the Romans, that when God gave up the Gentiles to their sins, they gave up themselves unto all uncleanness, and were past feeling. The saints and people of God on the contrary, in the time of their desertion, are tender in the point of sin, and they mourn after God: when was a man ever forsaken, whose heart was in this frame?

5. Did you ever read that Christ did finally forsake a man in whose heart and soul, still he did leave his goods, furni-

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ture, and spiritual household-stuff? A man sometimes goes from home, and sometimes he doth quite leave his house. There is much difference between those two: if a man leave his house, and comes no more, then he carries away all his goods; and when ye see them carried away, ye say, This man will come no more. But though a man ride a great journey, yet he may come again; and ye say, Surely he will come again; why? Because still his goods, wife, and children are in his house. So if Christ reject a man and go away finally, he carries away all his goods, spiritual gifts, graces, and principles: but though he be long absent, yet if his household stuff abide in the heart; if there be the same desires after him, and delight in him, and admiring of him, and mourning for want of him; ye may say, surely he will come again? Why? Because his household-stuff is here still. When did Christ ever forsake a man in whose heart he left his spiritual furniture?

6. Did ye ever know a man finally forsaken of Christ, who did long after the presence of Christ, as the greatest good; and looked upon his absence as the greatest evil and affliction in all the world; being willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ, and to serve him in the lowest and meanest condition, so he might but enjoy him? We find that the saints desire, above all things, to be kissed with the kisses of Christ's mouth: and therefore the book of the Canticles doth so begin, chapter ii. 1. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;" even because that is the first and the chiefest of the saints desires in this life: but if Christ will not kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, saith a gracious soul, yet I am willing to kiss his feet, as Mary did. There is a time coming, when he will kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for ever; but for the present, if I can but kiss his feet here, I have hope to be kissed by him in heaven. Now, I say, did Christ ever forsake a man finally, who did thus long after Christ himself? Can those that are forsaken, mourn after his presence as the best thing, and for his absence as the greatest evil in all the world? I appeal to your own souls, and bosoms herein, whoever you are that labour under this fear, that Christ is gone, and he will return no more; suppose that God hath hid his face from you, seems to forget you, and to be angry with you; yet in the midst of all these darknesses, do you

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find an evil spirit, an envious, malicious spirit from the Lord, seizing upon you? Do you find, that you can find in your heart to forsake God, and the good ways of God? Yea, rather, do you not find the contrary, though you want the sense of God's love? Have you not the sense of your own sin; and when you want the sense of your own perfection, have you not some sense of your own imperfection? Do you not look upon this desertion, as the greatest affliction in all the world? Can you not mourn after God, and his presence? Doth not Christ every foot, send in one token of his love or another to visit your souls? And are you not willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ? Oh yes, I must needs say, though I have fears that Christ is gone, and will return no more, yet, I praise the Lord, I do not find an envious, malicious persecuting spirit in my soul unto the saints and people of God. I do not find that my heart is willing to forsake Christ, and the good ways of Christ: but I find that I can mourn for the absence of Christ simply for itself, and look upon it as the greatest affliction in the world: that I am ever willing to kiss the feet of Jesus Christ: and to be in the lowest and meanest condition, so he would but return unto my soul again. Yea, and I must needs say, that every foot I receive one token or other, one promise or another to visit me in my condition. Then, be of good comfort; though Christ be absent, yet he will return again; and with great mercy, and with everlasting kindness will he gather your souls unto himself again: and thus I say it shall be with all the saints. Surely therefore they have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their desertions be. Why therefore should not every one say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou so disquieted within me?"

Upon all this account I see, I have not so much reason for my discouragement: but it is an hard thing to bear up ones heart from sinking in the time of desertion, when God hides his face: what shall I do then, and this may be the condition of us all, that I may bear up my heart against this discouragement, even when I am most in the dark, and Christ hides his face from me, or forsakes me?

Take heed that ye do not measure God's eternal affection, by some present dispensation. There is an eternal displeasure against a man; and there is a present displeasure with a

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man. Eternal displeasure, or hatred, cannot stand with eternal love; but eternal love, and present displeasure, may stand together. A father may be displeased with the child for the present, and yet may love him with paternal love. So God may, and doth love, though for the present displeased: but when men measure eternal affection, by present dispensation, then they are quite discouraged; and you will find all discouragements in this case do arise from hence. Some there are, that do walk by particular providences, experiences, words, manifestations, and incomes of love; and when they have them, then they are much refreshed; and if they want them, then they are much discouraged, and say, Ah, Christ loves me not, and God is gone, will return no more. Why? Because they measure God's eternal love, by some present dispensation: but if God's present dispensations may seem to run cross to his eternal purpose, why then should they be discouraged, and say, He is gone for ever? Now so it is, he may hide his face, he may withdraw, and deny particular comforts, and manifestations, yet love me eternally. Oh, that people would not measure God's eternal affection, by some present dispensation, so should they never be much discouraged.

If you would not be discouraged in this condition, take heed of letting fall any despairing, despondent, unbelieving speeches; for the more busy Satan is about you, in the time of desertion, the more tedious will that time be, and more full of discouragements. Now look, as it is with some dog; if you let fall a bone, or bread, or meat, the dog stays and waits still; but when he finds none, he goes his ways. So it is with Satan, when a man is in a desertion, he comes, and saith he, This is a time for me to work, who am the firstborn child of darkness; and this soul being in the dark, it is a fit time for me to work upon him; there he stands, and if any despairing, despondent speches do fall from you, Satan stays the longer; but if none fall he goes away the sooner. Have you therefore been, or are you under any desertion, and let fall any bones for Satan? look back, and gather them all up again, gather up these crumbs again, and mourn over them, and take heed for the time to come; for the more of these fall, the longer Satan stays, and the more you will be discouraged.

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Be sure that you hear things indifferently on both sides. There are two parties pleading in your souls in the time of desertion. One that doth plead for Christ, to maintain and bear up the love of Christ in your heart, saying, He is gone indeed, and he doth hide his face; but he will come again, and shine upon you again. There is another party, that doth plead the cause of Satan, against Christ, saying, He is now gone, and will return no more, you shall never see his face again. In this case be sure that you do hear things indifferently, and let not your ear be open to one, and shut to the other. He can never judge rightly, that doth not hear both parties. Though it be no time to judge when you are under temptation, and in the dark; yet how frequently do poor souls judge themselves in this condition, and even judge themselves to be under judgment, why? but because they hearken more to one side than to the other. If Satan come, and tell them a story of God's displeasure, they will be sure to hear that at large; but if Christ come and tell them a story of God's love to sinners, that they hear not; or if they do, yet as a man that reads a book to confute it, is disputing against what he reads all along, so are they also disputing against the words of the gospel all along as they hear them; saying in their hearts, Oh! but this is not made for me; it is a good promise, but it belongs not to me, this is not my condition; and a hundred such oh buts! But is this equal? How is it possible, but that a man should misjudge, and be much discouraged, when he hears thus? Wherefore, my exhortation from the Lord is, which I beseech you in his name to receive; never receive any relation from the law, but be assured your ears be as open for to hear the gospel: never receive any relation, or story from Satan; but let your ear be as open to hear what Christ saith. And why should not this exhortation be received? Had I intreated some great thing for Christ, would you not have done it? But now that I only intreat you to carry things indifferently, to have an ear open, as well to Christ, as to Satan; will ye not yield to it? Oh, methinks every gracious soul should say, Well, through grace, I will hearken more to Christ: I confess indeed, I have heard what Satan hath said; but when comfort hath come, I have turned away mine ear, and have not heard; or if I have heard, I have been disputing

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against what I have heard, and making objections all along: now the Lord pardon this evil to me; through grace, mine ear shall be more open to Christ, and less open to Satan. So do, and you will never be much discouraged, whatever your desertion be.

Labour more and more for to live by faith: when God seems to be mine enemy, saith Luther, and to stand with a drawn sword against me, then do I cast, and throw myself into his arms: and what better way than to venture upon God in this case? and to say, whether saved, or not saved; whether damned, or not damned; whether hypocrite, or not hypocrite; I do cast myself upon God at a venture. It is the love, and favour of Christ, that you mourn after, and are discouraged for the want of; you cannot get a more ready, and compendious way to get this love, than, when you are in the dark, to throw yourselves into Christ's arms at a venture; this takes, and wins the heart of Christ over to you: What! will this poor soul throw himself into my arms (saith Christ) now I do seem his enemy? well, then I will shew myself to be his friend; and this is the proper work of this life: as for those sights and visions of God, they are the work of heaven; and though God give them sometimes, yet it argues more strength of grace for to be able to live without them. Suppose two men in your work; one that must have his pay presently, his wages presently, yea before he hath done his work: the other will not have his wages till his work be all done, and if ye offer him money, No, saith he, I will stay till all be done, and receive it in a lump together: which of these two, is the ablest man, or which the poorest man? Will you not say, Surely, he that cannot stay, is the poorest? and he that can stay longest for his wages, is the ablest man? So it is here; God hath two sorts of servants: one that doth go by visions and manifestations of love, and are not able to live at all by faith, but must have sights, and visions, and manifestations every day, or else they die, and murmur or complain. And others say, Oh! but these sights and visions are for heaven; if God will have it so, I am contented to stay till all my work be done: which of these two is the poorest or the strongest? Will not ye say, surely, he that is able to stay, is strongest; and he the poorest, and weakest, that is not able to stay, or to live by

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faith; Oh! therefore labor more and more to live by faith; and when you are in desertion, say, whether saved, or not saved; whether hypocrite, or not hyprocrite, I will stay, I will wait on God, and let him come when he pleaseth. If you lay yourself at Christ's feet, he will take you into his arms.

But what need I say more? Is there not enough in the compass of your own experience, to answer unto all your fears in this respect? When you have been in desertion, have you not said that Christ is gone and that he will never come again: and yet hath not Christ come again? Yea, and have you not said in the day of your desertion, If ever Christ do return again, I will never make such unbelieving conclusions as I have done: and hath not Christ returned after this? Now, then, when Satan comes, and suggests jealousies of Christ's love unto you, why are you not more peremptory? Why do you not say to him? this I have heard before, Satan; thou toldest me this before, that Christ was gone, and would never return again; but I have found it false, he did return, and therefore through grace, I will never believe these false reports of Christ; Christ is faithful, I have always found him so; those whom he loves, he loves to the end; and I know he loves me, Satan, for I love him; for my love is but the reflection of his love; I could not love him, if he did not love me first, and through grace, I love him; I know he loves me, because he hath changed me, and is every foot sending me some tokens of love; one promise, or another to uphold my heart; yea, I know, Satan, that Christ doth love me, because thou tellest me that he hates me; and if he hath loved once he will love me to the end; and therefore though for the present he hides his face from me; yet I shall see his face again. Thus gather in your experiences, and plead with Satan, or your own unbelieving hearts, according unto all these experiences; so shall you be able to live in the time of this desertion, and never be discouraged, whatever your desertions be.

And so much for the sixth instance.

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SERMON X.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF AFFLICTION.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me," &c.—Psalm xlii. 11.

VII. SOMETIMES the discouragements of the saints, are from their outward afflictions, and relations.

So it was here with David; for, saith he, verse 3, "My tears have been my meat day and night." Whereupon, verse 5, 6, "My soul is cast down within me:" then verse 7, 8, "All thy billows are gone over me:" verse 10, "As a sword in my bones, whilst they reproach me daily:" then verse 11, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" To the like purpose he speaketh in the next Psalm, verse 2, "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" then, verse 5, 6, "Why art thou cast down?" So that his inward discouragements did arise very much from his outward afflictions. And thus it is ordinarily with the people of God; for, saith one, Never was any soul afflicted as I have been, and am: I confess indeed that national calamities are very great; but besides national miseries, I have many, and many personal afflictions; and therefore now it is that I am thus discouraged, have I not reason for it? No.

I grant, and confess it no new thing for God's own children to be much afflicted: "these are they that came out of great tribulations," Rev. vii. And

When God's people are so afflicted, they are, and will be very sensible of their affliction; in some respects more sensible than wicked men; for the more apprehensive a man is of God's displeasure under affliction, the more sensible he must needs be of the burden of it. Now the saints and people of God, in the day of their affliction, are more apprehensive of God's displeasure than wicked men are, and so in some respects are more sensible of their afflictions. Yea,

As they are, and will be very sensible of their afflictions, so they are very apt to be much discouraged, by reason of them. And therefore said the Psalmist, Psalm cxliii. "Therefore my soul is overwhelmed within me, and my heart is desolate;"

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why? Read verse 3, and ye shall find the reason, "Because the enemy oppressed me." And was not Joshua thus exceedingly cast down, when a party of his men fell before the men of Ai? See how he lies on the ground, chapter vii, and what language he speaks; even the same for substance, that murmuring Israel had spoken: for they said, "Would God we had stayed in Egypt:" and saith he, "Would God we had stayed on the other side Jordan:" yet Joshua, a most gracious, holy, blessed servant of God. So that God's own people are apt to be much discouraged, by reason of their afflictions ,and outward sufferings. But now I say, let a man's afflictions be never so great, yet if he be in Christ, and have made his peace with God, he hath no reason to be cast down or discouraged, whatever his afflictions be; for, saith our Saviour, "In the world you have trouble; but be of good comfort I have overcome the world:" And the more a man is discouraged under his afflictions, the less able he is to bear it. So long as a man's hand hath skin upon it, he is able to put it into the sharpest vinegar, without smarting; but if the skin be off, it doth smart exceedingly, and he can hardly bear it. So long as a man's bones are knit together, and in joint, he may stand under a great burden, but if the shoulder bone be out of joint, who can bear a burden? And what do all our discouragements, but disjoint the soul, and put the spirit on the rack? Discouragements make afflictions to stay the longer: an impatient patient makes a cruel physician: and the more the child cries under the rod, the longer the rod is continued; what reason therefore, for our discouragements under afflictions?

But this truth will appear if you consider, 1. What the afflictions and sufferings of the saints are. 2. Whence they proceed. 3. What accompanies them. 4. What follows them, and what is wrought by them.

First: As for the afflictions themselves. 1. They are part of Christ's purchase for you. Look upon Paul's inventory, 1 Cor. iii. 21. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." So that death itself, the king of terrors and afflictions, is here reckoned amongst the goods and chattels which Christ hath purchased for you, and left unto you; and if death be yours, then all afflictions are

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yours; and who will be afraid of that which is his own? 2. They are the gift of God; "To you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer," saith the apostle. It was the speech of a good man, now in heaven, being once under great afflictions; O Lord, these afflictions are thy pearls, and I will wear them for thy sake. 3. They are but seeming evils; they are real trials and seeming evils. Therefore the apostle saith, "Every affliction seems grievous;" but considering altogether, it is rather a seeming than a real grief. And therefore saith he, 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10, "We are as unknown and yet well known: as dying and behold we live: as chastened, but not killed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." In which words as Austin observes, he puts a *tanquam, sicut* AS upon his afflictions; as if his sufferings where but *as* afflictions, and not afflictions. When a man takes any physic, he is sick withal, yet because it is but physic-sickness, you do not call it a sickness; it is *as* a sickness, but not a sickness. Now all the afflictions of the saints, are but their physic, prescribed and given them by the hand of their Father: and therefore, though they be sick therewith, yet it is but as a sickness, not so indeed all things rightly weighed. When an unskilful eye looks upon the threshing of the corn, he saith, Why do they spoil the corn? But those that know better, say, The flail doth not hurt the corn; if the cart-wheel should pass upon it, there would be spoil indeed, but the flail hurts not. Now there is no affliction, or suffering that a godly man meets with, but is God's flail. And if you look into Isaiah, xxviii, ye shall find the Lord promiseth, under a similitude, that his cart-wheel shall not pass upon those that are weak, ver. 27, "For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin, the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with the rod." God will always proportion his rod to our strength. But though mine affliction be not greater than I can bear, yet if it lie too long upon me (say some) I shall never be able to bear it. Nay, saith the Lord, ver. 28, "Bread-corn is bruised, because he will not ever be threshing it." But what is this to us? Yes, it is a parable, for ver. 26, "His God (speaking of the ploughman) doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach

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him." And if the ploughman have this discretion, much more shall the Lord himself; for, ver. 29, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." I am God's corn, said the martyr, I most therefore pass under the flail, through the fan, under the millstone, into the oven before I can be bread for him. And if our chaff be severed from our graces by this flail, have we any reason to be discouraged because we are thus afflicted? The truth is, the day of affliction and tribulation, is a godly man's day of judgment, it is all his judgment day, he shall never be judged again, so as to be condemned at the day of judgment; "Ye are judged with the world (saith the apostle) that ye may not be condemned with the world." And when the godly man's affliction day is, he may say, Now is my judgment day, and I shall never be judged again; why therefore should he be discouraged, whatever his afflictions be?

And in the second place. This will appear also, if you consider, whence their afflictions come. If all the sufferings of God's people do come from divine love, the love of God in Christ to them, then have they no reason to be discouraged though they be much afflicted. Every rod is a rod of rosemary to them, fruits of their Father's love. And if you look into Heb. xii, ye shall find both the thing proved, and the inference. The thing is proved at ver. 6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Which he illustrates by a similitude. Suppose a man have two sons, one a bastard and the other legitimate; he will rather give education and correction to the legitimate son, and neglect the bastard: and saith the apostle, ver. 8, "If ye be without chastisement, then are you bastards, and not sons." What then? Ver. 12, "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees." As if the apostle should say, If all the sufferings and afflictions and chastisements of the saints, do proceed from love, then have they no reason to hang down their hands or heads. But so it is, that all their sufferings come from love, and therefore no reason for their discouragements.

Thirdly. This will appear also, if you consider, what comes with the afflictions of the saints. There comes much supporting grace, much light, much of God's presence,

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fellowship and communion with Christ in all his sufferings. Much supporting grace: "Thy rod, and thy staff comfort me." God never lays a rod upon his children's back, but he first puts a staff into their hand to bear it; and the staff is as big as the rod. It matters not what your afflictions be, great, or small, it is all one, you shall be upheld; and upholding mercy is sometimes better than a mercy that you are afflicted for the want of. But the Lord doth not only uphold his people under sufferings, but he gives forth much light therewithal. The school of the cross, is the school of light.* Affliction is our free-school, where God teacheth his children, and learns them how to write, both their sins and their graces. Their sins: so long as leaves are on the trees and bushes, ye cannot see the birds' nests: but in the winter when all the leaves are off, then ye see them plainly. And so long as men are in prosperity, and have their leaves on, they do not see what nests of sins and lusts are in their hearts and lives; but when all their leaves are off, in the day of their afflictions, then they see them and say, I did not think I had such nests of sins and lusts, in my soul and life. Job xxxvi. 6. "He withdraweth not his eye from the righteous:" verse 8, "And if he be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then he shews them their works and their transgressions, that they have exceeded." Yea, afflictions do not only discover their sins unto them; but it is God's plaster, thereby he doth heal the same: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray," saith David. And Job xxxvi. 10, "He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." Yea, these afflictions and sufferings of the saints do not only discover and heal their sins; but do put them upon the exercise of grace: "In their afflictions (saith God) they will seek me early." Yea, they do not only draw out their graces but discover their graces too, which possibly they did never take notice of before. I have read of some foolish youths, that sitting on the water side, upon the bank, and mingling their legs togegether in the water, they did not know their own legs; but one standing by, and smiting them on the knees with a staff, every one then knew his own legs, and pulled them up. And so

* Via crucis, via lucis.

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it is many times; there is such a likeness between hypocrites' common graces, and the graces of God's children, that the saints do not know their own graces; Oh, saith one, it is no more than a hypocrite may have; but then God smites them with some affliction, and so they feel, and see, and know their own graces: and good reason for it; for when God comes, he discovers all: and when is God more present with his people, than when they are most afflicted? God useth to be at the back of affliction. There heaven opened to Stephen. Afflictions are the rusty lock oftentimes, which opens the door into the presence chamber. When was Christ with the three children but in the very fiery furnace? And ye have a standing promise for it, "I will be with thee in the fire, and in the water," saith the Lord. And saith the apostle, "Then doth the Spirit of the Lord and of glory, rest upon his children." Yea, and as they have most of God, when they are most afflicted, so in time of their sufferings, they have most communion, and fellowship with Jesus Christ in his sufferings. Therefore saith the apostle Peter, chap. iv. ver. 13, "But rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." The word *partaker* is the same that is used in John; "Truly our fellowship is with the Father." And the same that is used in the Corinthians, concerning the Lord's supper, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" You will all grant that you have communion with Christ at the Lord's supper; but the same word being used here shows that you have communion with Christ in his sufferings also; especially when you do suffer for him. And the greater your sufferings are, the more fellowship and communion you have with Christ in his sufferings. Now then, if all this be true, that a christian hath experience of supporting and upholding grace; much light; his sin discovered and healed; his grace exercised and manifested; God's presence enjoyed; and made partaker of the sufferings of Christ, in and by his afflictions; what reason hath he to be discouraged, although he be much afflicted? But so it is that a christian hath never more experience of God's upholding, sustaining grace; his sin is never more discovered, and healed; his grace is never more exercised and manifested; God is never more present with him, than when he is most

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afflicted: and he is never more partaker of Christ's sufferings than in and by his sufferings. Surely therefore, he hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his afflictions be.

Fourthly. This will appear if you consider the fruit, benefit, end, and issue of your afflictions, and what they bring forth. "They bring forth the quiet fruits of righteousness," and triumph over Satan; for now poor Job may say, Satan, thou saidst I did not serve God for nought; but now the contrary appears. Yea "they work out an exceeding, eternal weight of glory." And if you look into Phil. ii., where we are commanded "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling:" you shall find it is the same word that is used here concerning afflictions; that they work out an exceeding, eternal weight of glory. Now if all my afflictions do bring me in the quiet fruit of righteousness; make me to triumph over Satan; and work out an exceeding weight of glory; have I any reason to be discouraged, although I be much afflicted? Thus it is with all the saints and people of God; though their sufferings may seem to be grievous for the present, yet they bring forth the quiet fruits of righteousness; thereby the saints triumph over Satan; and these sufferings work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Surely therefore, a godly, gracious man hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever his affliction be.

But my affliction is not an ordinary affliction; my sufferings are not ordinary sufferings; for I have lost all my comforts and am stript naked of all my former blessings and relations: I have been long afflicted, and many afflictions crowd and press in upon me, like so many waves of the sea: only there is this difference; the waves come and go, but my afflictions come and stay; they come and go not; they all stay upon me at once and I see no end of my afflictions: the floods are risen, O God, the water-floods are risen and do cover my soul; yea and these waters of affliction are so deep, that I can feel no bottom, see no end of them: have I not just cause and reason then to be much discouraged?

No: for what if you have been, or would be drunk with the comforts of your own relations? Noah was drunk with his own wine; and how many are there in the world, that have been drunk, even with the comforts of their own rela-

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tions? And if God your Father see, that you have been or would be drunk with your own comforts, have you any hurt, that he hath taken them from you for a time? When a wise father sees that his child falls in love with his maid, one that is much beneath him; doth his father do him any wrong, that he removes her from him, or him out of her sight? It may be the present affection of the child saith, my father deals hardly by me: but will the child's reason say so afterwards? No, but he will rather say, at such a time I fell in love with my father's servant, and if my father had not removed her out of my sight, I had been lost and undone for ever. Now all the creatures are servants to the children of God, and it may be, God your Father seeth that you are fallen in love with them that are much beneath you. Or, suppose that a child be to travel some long journey, and his father gives him a staff in his hand; when he is abroad in the fields, some enemy meets him, and takes away his staff, and beats the child therewithal; but a friend comes in, and takes away this staff from both, both from the child and from the enemy; doth he do the child any wrong, in taking away this staff out of the hand of the enemy? May be the child will say, I pray Sir, give me the staff again, for it is mine; True, saith the friend, child, this staff is yours, but you have not strength enough to use it, and manage it against your enemy, he would wrest it out of your hand again, and beat you with it, and therefore I will keep it from you both: doth he therefore do the child any wrong? Thus it is here: the Lord gives a creature-comfort into the hands of his child, and God intends it for a staff (for bread is the staff of life): but Satan comes, and wresteth his staff out of his hand, and beats him therewithal: then comes Jesus Christ, and takes it out of the hands of both; Oh, saith the child of God, but I pray thee, Lord, give me this creature-comfort, for it is my staff. True child, saith Christ, it is thy staff, but thou hast not strength to wield it against Satan, he will abuse thee with it; therefore I will keep it from thee, and in due time thou shalt have it again: doth Christ our Lord and best friend, do him any wrong in keeping it from him?

Oh, but my afflictions are not ordinary and usual, but new and strange.

You think so; but the Apostle saith, "Think it not

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strange concerning the fiery trial, as if some new thing had befallen you." And what if God will carry you to heaven by some back way, and let you in at some back door; hath not he promised to lead us in a way that we have not known?

Oh, but I do not only want one mercy, but I do want another and another; afflictions come thick, and I see no end, I feel no bottom.

And was it not so with David, the type of Christ? Psalm xl. 1, 2, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined his ear unto me, and heard my cry: he brought me out also of an horrible pit; (or as some read it, out of an unbottomed pit) out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Three things here that are most observable. 1. David was in such an affliction, wherein he did feel no bottom at the first, saw no end. 2. Though he felt no bottom at the first, yet at the last he did, and a rock which God set his feet upon and established his goings. 3. Till he did find this rock, he prayed, and waited patiently, and he was not discouraged. What therefore though our afflictions be as thick as any mire, that therein you do stick so fast, as you cannot get out, that you feel no bottom, see no end; yet if in this case you pray and cry and wait patiently on the Lord, as David did; you shall be set upon a rock in due time, and your goings shall be also established. And whereas you say, that your afflictions are thick and long and hard; how long man? What! is your bush consumed? Do they not make you long more for heaven? When the apprenticeship is hard and tedious, the young man longs for the day of his freedom. Oh, saith he, that I were in my father's house. Oh, that the time of my freedom were come. So here, long and hard afflictions, make us long more for heaven. Now will ye count that too long, which makes you long more for heaven? And as for your relational comforts; did God ever take away the comfort of an outward relation, and not make it up in the sweetness of spiritual relations?

But this is not all my case; for I do not only want such and such comforts, I do not barely want the comforts, and the love of my relations; but I feel the anger, and the smart of them; for my own familiar friends, and acquaintance are become mine enemies; they reproach me, curse me, speak

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all manner of evil of me without cause; and this they do since I set my face towards heaven: time was heretofore, when they did love me dearly; bnt now they hate me, they persecute me, and do all manner of evil to me; and is this nothing? Is not this a just cause, and reason for my discouragement?

No. For if our worst enemies be sometimes our best friends, then what reason is there that we should be discouraged, although we be much opposed? Now so it is many times; as our best friends are our worst enemies by flattering us, so our worst enemies are our best friends bv making us more watchful. So many enemies, so many schoolmasters, saith one.* Hath not our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ said, "Our enemies are those of our own house, they shall ever revile you and persecute you; but blessed are you, when they do all this for my name's sake." And I pray tell me whether it is worser to be persecuted or to be a persecutor? Your friends persecute you, speak all manner of evil and do all manner of evil to you, even since you have looked towards Christ; and for his sake they do it, for his sake ye are persecuted, opposed, maligned. But you might have been the persecutor, and they the persecuted. Which is worst? Will you not say, Oh, it is infinitely better to be opposed for the way of God than to oppose; and to be persecuted than to persecute? I would chuse rather to be persecuted than to be a persecutor. God might have left you to be a persecutor, and your persecuting friends might have been persecuted by you; but now that God hath so ordered it by his providence and grace that you are persecuted and they persecutors, have you any reason to complain or to be discouraged? "Know ye not that the world hateth his own?" So long as the pot stands empty and there is no honey in it, the bees and stinging wasps do not gather about it, but if once there be honey in it, then they flock about it. And so long as you were empty of what is good and walked on with an empty heart, no opposition was made unto you. But now these stinging bees and wasps flock about you, what doth this argue but that you have gotten some honey, somewhat that savoreth of good and of Christ, which you had not before? Why

* Totidem inimici, totidem pædagogi.

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should you not therefore rather praise God for what you have, than be discouraged under your opposition.

This is not my case. For I praise God I do not meet with any opposition or persecution from my friends, nor do I need; for my very affliction is an opposition unto what is good, my affliction doth indispose me unto what is good, and expose me unto what is evil, to temptations and many sins; it keeps me from duty, from ordinances and opportunities of doing and receiving good; and therefore I am thus discouraged under my affliction, have I not cause and reason now?

No. For it may be that you are mistaken here and think that you are hindered from the work of God, when indeed you are not. We read of Paul that he was whipped up and down the streets like a rogue, that he was oft imprisoned; and who would not think but that his reproaches and imprisonments should hinder him in the work of his ministry? But he saith that his "sufferings turned to the furtherance of the gospel."

When God leads a man into an affliction, then God doth call him to another work. So long as a man is well and in health, he is bound to go abroad and to hear the word; but when he is sick, then his work is not to hear, but to be patient and quiet under the hand of God; then he is called to that other work which his affliction doth lead him to. It may be, your affliction may hinder you from your former work which God hath called you from, but it doth not hinder you from that work whereunto you are now called by your affliction. And what though my affliction doth hinder me from my former work; yet if God will not fault me for the neglect of that, have I any reason to be discouraged because I do not do it? This is certain, that if God call me to a new work, he will never blame me if I lay by the former. You will not blame your servants if they lay by their former work, when you call them to a new. And when God leads into a new affliction, then he doth call to a new work.

And as for matter of temptation and sin, this is certain, that, that affliction doth never expose a man to a new sin, which doth make him sensible of his former sin. Now, as you have heard, the afflictions of the saints do both discover and heal their sins, making them sensible of them which

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they were not before. And if you look into Psalm cxxv. 3, you will find a promise to this purpose: "The rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands to iniquity." As it is with a master that sets his servant to beat the dust out of his garment, though he cause the rod or stick to pass upon the garment, yet he will not suffer it to rest so long upon the garment, as it shall be torn thereby. Your affliction is God's rod and he suffers it to pass upon your garment. Why? That he may fetch out your dust therewith; but he will not suffer this rod to rest so long upon you as to tear your garment. "Lest the righteous put forth their hand unto iniquity," saith the text.

And if this fear of yours be a good sign of your grace, then why should you be discouraged in this respect? Now what better sign of truth and uprightness of heart have you than this: that you are therefore troubled at your affliction, because it doth expose to temptation and sin, and because it doth hinder you from what is good; do you not say so? Lord, thou knowest I am therefore afflicted under this affliction, not because of the burden of it so much, but because thereby I am hindered from doing and receiving good, and exposed to such temptations; as for the affliction itself, though it be great, yet Lord, thou knowest I should submit to it and be quiet under it, were I not thereby exposed unto what is evil. Here now is sincerity, here is uprightness, and will you then be discouraged; nay, rather have you not cause and reason to be much encouraged?

This is not my fear, or cause of my discouragement, but I am under a great and sore affliction, so and so afflicted, and I fear I have brought myself into this affliction by my sin: had not my sin been the cause of my affliction, I should not be troubled; but oh, my affliction is great and long, and I am persuaded that my own sin is the cause thereof. Yea, and that which aggravateth the matter is, I cannot find out what the sin is; if God would but discover it to me, I should be more at quiet. But my sin is the cause of my affliction, and I know not what the particular sin is that hath brought me into this affliction. And have I not just cause and reason for my discouragement now?

No; for did not Jonah bring himself into his affliction by

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his sin, and yet when did God more fully appear to him, than when he was in the whale's belly? Did not David bring himself into his affliction by his sin: he sinned in the matter of Uriah, and the Lord said, "The sword shall never depart from thy house;" and what was the sword of Absolom, but an affliction which dropped out of that threatening, brought upon him by his sin: and yet when was David's heart in a better frame? "If (saith he) the Lord have any pleasure in me, he will bring me back to the ark again; if not, let him do with me what seemeth good in his eyes." And when did God more fully appear to David than under this affliction? for he prayed, "The Lord turn the counsel of Ahithophel into folly," and God heard him presently. And if ye look into Deut. iv., you shall find a standing promise made for your comfort in this matter: verse 25, "If you shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger; I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from the land; ye shall not prolong your days; the Lord will scatter you among the nations, and you shall be left few in number among the heathen, and there you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thine heart and all thy soul." Here was a great affliction, to be driven out into another country. This affliction was caused by their great sins. Yet the promise is, that if from thence, from this valley and bottom, they did seek the Lord, he would shew mercy to them. And all this in the times of the law: and is not God as gracious now in the times of the gospel, as then in the times of the law? And what though you cannot find out what the particular sin is, it is good to search, but sometimes it is better for a poor soul that it is not discovered; for if I be under an affliction for some particular sin, and find it out, then I am once humbled for it, and go no further: but if I find it not out, I search and search, and so am humbled continually for many sins. And therefore I say, it is sometimes better that the particular sin is not discovered. Why then should a godly, gracious soul be discouraged in this respect? Surely he hath no reason for it.

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Yet there is one thing sticks with me in regard of personal afflictions, I fear that they do not come from God's love; were I certain that this affliction did proceed from God's love, then I should never be troubled; but I even see the visible characters of God's displeasure and anger, engraven upon my afflictions, and therefore I am thus discouraged: have I not cause and reason now?

No; for if affliction do rather argue God's love, than hatred, then have you no reason to be discouraged. Now though affliction do not argue God's love; yet, I say, it doth rather argue love than hatred. A man may be no father to a child, yet he may correct him: but if two children commit a fault, and a man take the one and correct him, and let the other go, it argues rather that he is his father than not. So, though chastisements do not always argue God to be our Father, yet it doth rather argue his fatherly love than not.

And is there any thing in God, that is not a friend to all the saints? When a man is a friend to another, not only his purse is his friend, his estate is his friend, his staff is his friend; but his sword is his friend. So, if God be a friend to a man, then not only his love is his friend, and his mercy his friend, but his sword is his friend, his anger is his friend. Now God is a friend to all the saints, and therefore his very anger and justice is a friend too. But,

What are those visible characters of love, which are engraven upon an affliction?

If affliction be a blessing to one, then it doth come from love; and if a man can bless God under affliction, then it is a blessing to him. Job's affliction was a blessing to him: why? because he blessed God under it: "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be his name," &c.

If an affliction do end in our love to God, then it comes from God's love to us; for our love is but a reflection of God's love, and it doth flow from his: and if I can say, I love God never the worser for this affliction, then I may say, God loves me never the lesser, notwithstanding this affliction.

If an affliction teacheth the mind of God, then it doth come from love: "As many as he loveth, he chastiseth;" and, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastiseth, and teachest out of thy law." So that if affliction be a teaching affliction, then it doth come from love.

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If it be laid on in measure, and imposed in due and seasonable time, so as a man may grow thereby, then it doth come from love. When a man intendeth to kill and destroy a tree, or to bring it unto the fire, he cuts it at any time, so as it shall grow no more; but if he cut it in a due time, it argueth that he intendeth it for growth. So when God pruneth and cuts by afflictions, in such a time as men may grow in grace, it argues his love.

When God is especially present in affliction, and more present in an affliction than at another time, it argues that the affliction doth come from love. Now whoever you are that make this objection, and fear the affliction doth not come from love, are you not able to say, Thus I find it indeed, though I have been much afflicted, yet through grace I have been able to bless the Lord under my affliction, and to say, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away," &c. I love the Lord never the lesser for mine affliction, and the Lord hath taught me much in this mine affliction; I have gained more by my sickness, than by many a sermon; yea, and he hath cut me in due time, for if I had not met with such an affliction at such a time, I did not know what evil I should have fallen into. And this I must needs say, I have had more of God's presence in my affliction, than ever I had before. Well then, be of good comfort, though your affliction be very grievous, yet it doth come from love. And thus it is with all the saints and people of God, and therefore why should they be discouraged, whatever their affliction be?

But though a christian have no reason to be discouraged in regard of his own private affliction, yet hath he not reason to be discouraged, when it goes ill with the public? And thus it is now with us; we see how it is with this poor nation, troubles and calamities from every part, therefore I am thus discouraged; and have I not cause to be cast down, and to be much disquieted now?

Indeed, this is a sad thing; and oh, that we could weep day and night, and pray too, for this poor, bleeding nation! If ever God's people, here in England, had cause to be afflicted, troubled and humbled, under the hand of the Lord, and to run together in prayer, surely they have reason now;

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yet, saith the Scripture, "Say to the righteous, in evil times, It shall go well with him." Did ever any calamity come down like a storm upon a kingdom, but God did provide some hiding for his own children? Did he not provide an ark for Noah in the time of the flood, and a mountain for Lot in the time of the fire of Sodom? The worst that man can do, is but to kill his neighbour: death is the worst that can fall; and what is death, but an inlet to eternal life unto the people of God? When the saints in the primitive times came to bear witness by their deaths unto the truth of Christ, then they said, Now we begin to be christians indeed; now we begin to be like to Christ. There is a three-fold death: spiritual death in sin, eternal death for sin, and temporal death which came in by sin. If God spare me from the two former deaths—the spiritual death and eternal death—and only inflict the temporal death, have I any cause to complain? Thus it is with the saints: though they die temporally, yet they are free from the spiritual and eternal death; and what godly man may not say, I could not live long in nature, and shall I now bear witness unto the truth with this little spot of time that remains! Christ died for us, the just for the unjust, and shall not I that am unjust be willing to die for the just! The worst of all is death; the worst of death is gain. When my body is broken, may I not say, if godly, now a poor pitcher is broken, and shall go no more to the well: now a poor prisoner, my soul, is delivered, and I go home unto my Father. But if you look into the viith of Revelation, you shall find what a glorious issue God doth give unto all his people in the times of public troubles: verse 9, "After this I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, kindreds and people stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." A robe is a garment of majesty, palms are an ensign of victory; and saith he, I saw them with robes and palms. The world looks upon my servants as poor and of low spirits, but, saith Christ, I look upon them as under a royal, princely garment, in robes and of a princely spirit. And though the world looks upon them as discomforted, yet, saith Christ here, they shall overcome, for they have palms in their hands. But who are these; This scripture tells, verse 14, "These are they which come

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out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But why are they in white robes, and their robes washed? Because by their tribulations they are washed from filth. Affliction is God's soap: before a godly man goes into afflictions, his very graces are mixed with sin; his faith is mixed and dirtied with unbelief and doubtings, his humility with pride, his zeal with lukewarmness: but now, by his tribulation, his garments and robes are made white, and washed, and he shall be of a more royal spirit, and be clothed with robes. But though the Lord make use of my tribulations thus to wash, yet I fear that by these public calamities, I shall be driven from ordinances, the temple and worship of God. Nay, saith he, therefore, at verse 15, "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." But what though we have the ordinances, if Christ be not present with them? He adds, therefore, "And he that sits on the throne shall dwell amongst us." But though we have the presence of Jesus Christ, yet we may suffer much with want. True, yet verse 16, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." Oh, but yet we may be brought in the meanwhile into grievous straits, and be in a sad and mournful condition. True, but there is a time a coming when all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes; and therefore he adds this, at the 17th verse, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." How should tears be wiped away hereafter, if they were not shed for the present? Though then you do fear it now, and shed many tears, yet all shall be wiped away and not one left. Oh, what gracious dealing is here! Thus will Christ deal with his people in troublous times; and therefore though our condition, in regard of the public, be exceeding sad, and very grievous, insomuch as we have all cause to mourn and weep; yet if you be in Christ, and have made your peace with God, you have no reason to be cast down. And thus it is with every godly man: surely, therefore, a godly, gracious man, hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his affliction be.

But what shall we do, then, that we may not be discourag-

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ed, whatever our affliction be, whether public or private, national or personal? A good man, indeed, hath no reason to be discouraged under his affliction, but it is a hard thing to bear up against all discouragements under great affliction: what shall we do in this case?

Either you have assurance of God's love in Christ or not; if not, this affliction shall be a messenger to bring it to you. So look upon your affliction; and if you have assurance, then actuate your assurance, reflect much on your interest in, and your peace with God through Christ; put yourselves often upon this disjunction—either there is enough in God alone, or not; if there be not enough in God alone, how can the saints and angels live in heaven, who have no meat, drink, nor clothes there, but God alone? And if there be enough in God alone, why should I not be contented with my condition, and comforted under it, whatever it be? What though men hate me, if Christ loves me? Oh, labour more and more to see your interest in Christ, and ever hold it to your eye!

If you would not be discouraged under your afflictions, remember much your fellowship with Christ in his sufferings; thus: Now by these my sufferings have I fellowship with Christ in all his sufferings; and therefore as Christ died, and did rise again, so though my name dieth, estate dieth, body dieth, and all my comforts die, yet they shall rise again. The apostle argueth, and proves, that the Romans should die no more in their sins, because Christ being risen from the dead, died no more; and therefore, saith he, though you fall into sins, yet you shall die no more, because you are risen with Christ. So say I, though your afflictions be great, and seem to swallow up all your comforts, yet your comforts shall not be buried in them; for, if godly, you are risen with Christ, and have fellowship with him, and so die no more. When therefore affliction comes, rejoice in that you are made partakers of his sufferings, and say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet shall I rise again;" for by my sufferings I have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, and so in his resurrection, comforts and glories.

If you would not be discouraged under your afflictions, labour more and more to be strangers to the world, and to be acquainted with the ways of God under affliction. The dog

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doth not bite, or tear, or hurt those that dwell in the house; if a stranger comes, he flies upon him, and tears him, because he is not acquainted with him. And what reason is there that men's afflictions fly upon them and tear them so much as they do, but because they are strangers to, and know not the way of God under them; labour therefore to live by faith above the world, to be a stranger to the world, and be more acquainted with the way of affliction.

Consider what Christ hath borne and left you to bear. There are but two things to bear; sin and sufferings. Christ hath borne all your sins, will not ye bear his sufferings? He hath borne and carried the heavy end of the staff: you have not one sin to bear, and will you not then bear the sufferings?

Consider also, and that frequently and seriously, what abundance of good you and others get, or may get by your afflictions. God by afflictions lets out nothing but corrupt blood. Be of good comfort, man, (said one now in heaven, to another complaining under his afflictions,) Christ will do thee no hurt in the latter end. God never whips his children but for their good, and doth teach both them and others by them. I was converted (said one, telling the story of his conversion) by seeing a man executed; for, thought I, if a man be thus punished with death for breaking one of the laws of men; what do I then deserve, who have broken all the laws of God? Affliction sometimes teacheth the bystander much, but especially it is teaching to yourself; thereby you see and read the fulness of God, the emptiness of the creature, and the vileness of sin. It recals sin past, and prevents sin to come; it quickens prayer, and enlarges thankfulness. And it may be thou mayest owe thy conversion to some affliction, as a means thereof; and if so much good do come by it, will you be discouraged under it? Think, and think much of the good thereof.

Whenever any affliction comes, do not stand poring on the evil of it, but be sure that you look as well and as much upon what is with you, as upon what is against you: there is no mercy which you can lose, but hath some burden with it: there is no misery that can befal you, but hath some mercy with it. When men lose a mercy, they only consider the sweetness of a mercy lost, and not the burden that they do lose withal. Oh, saith a poor

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woman, I have lost my husband, so loving, so gracious, so helpful; but not a word of the burden that is gone withal, and so there is much discouragement. When affliction comes men only consider the evil, and not the mercy that doth come withal, and so they are much dejected. Suppose that a loving father in some high room, throw down a bag of gold to his child, and it lights on the child's head, insomuch as it breaketh his head and causeth the blood to come; whilst the child feels the smart thereof, he is impatient and forward; while he looks only upon the leathern bag he is not thankful; but when he looks into the bag, and sees what a great deal of gold his father hath given him, then he speaks well of his father, notwithstanding all the smart of his head. There is never an affliction, but is a bag of gold given unto the people of God; though it seem a leathern bag without, yet there is gold within; so long as they stand poring upon the leathern bag, or attend unto the smart of their affliction, they are not thankful, they do not praise the Lord, but are much discouraged; but if they would look into the bag, and tell their gold, then they would have comfort, and not be discouraged. I tell you from the Lord, there is gold within; look in this bag, the bag of affliction, tell over all your gold which the Lord hath given you in this affliction, and then you will be quiet. If a mercy be taken from you, consider the burden that is taken away too. If a misery come, consider the mercy that doth come withal; labour ever, labour to see both together, as well what is for you as what is against you, then will you never be much discouraged, although your affliction be never so great.

And thus I have done with the seventh instance.

SERMON XI.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF UNSERVICEABLENESS.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?" &c.—Psalm xlii. 11,

VIII. SOMETIMES the discouragements of the saints do arise from their employments, work and service.

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Either they are not called forth to work for God, as they do desire, or they do want abilities and skill to work, or they have no success in their work. Oh, says one, I am a poor, unuseful, and unserviceable creature; God hath done much for me, but I do nothing for God: others are used and employed for God, but as for me, I am cast by as an useless vessel, in whom God hath no pleasure: and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not just cause and reason now?

No, for is family work and service nothing, is relation work nothing? There is a three-fold sweat, says Luther; political sweat, ecclesiastical sweat, and domestical sweat. A man may sweat at family work; and it is a great betrustment to be trusted with the work of a family: and this work you are betrusted with.

Is it nothing for a man to be trusted with the work of his christian station? The whole body of Christ is divided into many members; every member in the body hath a work suitable unto it: the eye doth not hear, as the ear doth; nor the ear see, as the eye doth; but every member worketh according to that station which it hath in the body. So, "ye being one body, are many members," saith the apostle, and all members have not the same office. Look therefore, as the station is which ye have in the body of Christ, such is the work that ye are betrusted with.

And is it nothing for a man to be employed in comforting, relieving, and supporting others! This is so great a service, that the very angels are employed therein, as in a work most suitable to them. For when the Lord would stir up and provoke the children of Israel to repent, he sent a prophet to them. Judges vi. 7, 8. But when he would comfort, strengthen, and encourage Gideon, he doth not employ the prophet therein, but he sends an angel to him, saying, verse 12, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." And if ye look into the story of the New Testament, ye shall find, that when Christ was on Mount Tabor, in his transfiguration, then the angels are not said to attend upon him; but when he was sweating in the garden, then the angels came and comforted and ministered to him. Why? Because this is angelical work, to comfort, relieve, and support others in the

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time of distress.* Now are you not trusted with this work? How many poor, drooping, tempted, and deserted souls are there whom you may go and administer to! And is this no work at all?

But there is a generation work, a work of special employment, which God doth trust others with; as for me I have none of this work to do, I am a poor, useless, and unserviceable person, one that God doth not use at all, and therefore I am thus discouraged. For is it not a very great mercy to be used and employed for God in the world?

Yes, it is a very great mercy and blessing, I confess, to be used in any work or service of God. This was Moses' commendation, that he was the servant of God; Moses, "the servant of the Lord, is dead." And in this title David gloried more than that he was king of Israel, Psalm xviii, "A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord." He doth not say, A Psalm of David, the king of Israel. Thus Paul, Peter, James, and Jude do entitle their epistles: Paul, a servant of Christ; and Peter, a servant of Christ; and James, a servant of Christ; and Jude, a servant of Christ. Yea, and Christ himself doth glory in this title of God's servant; and the Father glories in Christ on this account: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen. My servant the Branch." So that a great privilege it is to be God's servant, used and employed for him.

The more serviceable a man is to God the more he doth honor God, and the more he honors God, the more he honors himself. *Honor est in honorante.* Those that stand before, and wait on kings and princes, honor themselves in honoring their masters. So in honoring God, a man honors himself; yea, and thereby God doth put honor on him: for what is honor but *Testimonium de alicujus excellentia*, testifying of another's excellency; and the more I testify of any excellency in a man, the more I honor him. Now, when God doth betrust a man with his work, he testifies of an excellency in him: "The Lord hath counted me faithful, and

* Quasi angelus sibi munus consolandi miseros tanquam gloriosius percipiat, munus autem objurgandi impios tanquam minus nobile, hominibus remittat.—Cajetan.

Ac si angeli proniores essent ad laborantem consolandum quam ad gratulandum triumphanti.—Mendoza in 1 Sam. cap. i. § 6.

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put me into his work," saith Paul. Yea, the greatest greatness in this world is to wait upon the great God. Therefore, saith our Saviour of John the Baptist, "Amongst them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than he." Matthew xi. 11. And if ye look into Gen. i., ye shall find that the moon is called one of the two great lights, ver. 16, "And God made two great lights, the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night." But though the moon is said to be lesser than the sun, yet it is said to be one of the two great lights. And why so? are there not other stars greater than the moon? Yes; but because the moon is the most influential and serviceable to the world, therefore it is said to be greater than others. So that in God's account, the more service we do in the world the greater we are, and the more honorable in God's eyes.

Thereby also we are kept from the dint of temptations; idleness breeds temptation. Our vacation is the Devil's term; when we are least at work for God, then is Satan most at work about us. By doing nothing men learn to do evil. Yea, idleness is the burying of a living man.*

Great and good employment is the mercy promised. That can hardly be a small mercy, which the great God doth promise; promised mercies are the sweetest mercies. Now the Lord promiseth, Isaiah lviii. 18, "That if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, &c. the Lord shall guide thee continually; and they that shall be of thee, shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breaches, the restorer of paths to dwell in." Here is employment and betrustment promised.

The more useful and serviceable a man is to God, the more apt and ready God will be to pardon his failings; not only the failings of his present employment, but of the other part of his life also. What a great failing was that in Rahab, to say the spies were gone, when she had hid them in the top of her house. Yet the Lord pardoned this failing to her. Why? Because she believed, and was useful, and serviceable unto God's great design in that her day. And if ye look into Numb. xii. ye shall find, that though Aaron and Miriam were both engaged in the same sin and evil, of

*Homines nihil agendo male discunt agere. Otium est vivi hominis sepultura. Sen.

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envying and murmuring against Moses, yet the Lord spared Aaron when he struck Miriam with a leprosy. But why (saith Abulensis) was not Aaron smitten with the leprosy as well as Miriam? what, because he was not so deeply in the transgression as she was? No; for verse 1, it is said, "then spake Aaron and Miriam;" not as if she were put on by him; or because that Aaron confessed his sin as she did not? No, for so did Miriam also, for she was a good woman. Or because that God owed Aaron a punishment till afterwards? * No, for that appears not by the text; but he was the high priest, and if he had been smitten with leprosy, it would have brought his ministry under some contempt, the work of the Lord would have ceased for a time also, and though he failed in this thing, yet he was otherwise a very useful and serviceable man; and God would shew his aptness and readiness to pardon such, rather than others.

If a man be employed for God in any special service and work, the Lord will not only pardon his failings, but if he be faithful in his work, God will bless him, and set a character of love and favor upon him. What a character of love did the Lord set on Caleb and Joshua. Of all men in scripture, it is said of Caleb, that he followed the Lord fully; and this character God himself did set upon him, Numb. xv. 24, "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, &c." But why did God own and dignify Caleb thus? Even because he was faithful in that work, service, and employment which God did call him to.

Yea, the serviceable man is the only man who doth live and speak when he is dead; I mean for God. Some are very active and serviceable for the Devil; whilst they live, they write and print wanton, filthy books; and they speak while they are dead, but it is still for Satan. Others are very active and serviceable for God; while they live, they write and print works of faith and holiness; and they also speak when they are dead. As it is said of Abel, "who being dead, yet speaketh;" but how doth he speak now? The apostle tells us, Heb. xi. by faith, by which δι αυτης, it relates unto πιστις faith. Well, but what act of faith did he

* Λεγεται και Ααρων δια το της ιεροσυνης αξιωμα με λεπροθηναι Chrysostom. Hom. 8. ad Colos.

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do? He offered a more excellent sacrifice than his elder brother, which was the work and service of his day. So that the serviceable man is the only man who doth speak when he is dead. Surely therefore, it is a very great privilege and mercy, to be used and employed for God in his work and service. Yet if God will not use me, why should I be discouraged, or complain? Is not God free; and may not he employ whom he pleaseth? Shall the poor potsherd say unto him, why dost thou lay me by? What if God will cross hands, and lay his right hand on another's head, and his left hand on mine; shall I think to direct and order the hands of God's providence, as Joseph would have altered Jacob's? Is not his work his own; and may not he put it out unto whom he please; and if I complain thereof, is not this my pride? Proud men scorn their own employment, and envy at others. It is a mercy indeed to be employed for God; yet if God will not trust me with his service, as I desire, why should I be discouraged? Yet I may be God's servant. For,

1. The service of God is twofold. Sometimes it is taken for some special employment, which a man is called forth unto. And sometimes it is taken for our ordinary obedience unto God's commandments. In the first sense it is used often in Numb. iv. and frequently in the old testament called, the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. So in the new testament also, Rom. xv. 31, "That my service may be accepted." In the second sense it is used, Rom. xii. 1, "Which is your reasonable service." So also, Rev. ii. 19, "I know thy work, charity and service." This latter service, is the saving service, that service whereby, in a special manner, we are called God's servants. And in that respect we may be serviceable to God, though not in the former.

2. As for the service of special employment, that is also various. Sometimes God doth call a man to one kind of service, sometimes to another. He hath several ways of employment; he employed Moses one way, in giving out the law; and he employed Ezra another way, in restoring of the law. Both were employed, but their employments were very different. In 1 Sam. xxx. we read, that when David fought against the Amalekites, to recover his wives and substance, some of his men stayed and tarried by the stuff,

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to preserve that; and saith David, verse 24, "As his part is, that goeth down to the battle; so shall his part be, that tarrieth by the stuff, they shall part alike." Now it may be you are one of those that stay by Christ's stuff, being employed in some lower and meaner service; Christ hath a care of you, and though you stay at home, yet you, even you shall have part in the spoil, as well as those whose work and employment is more honourable.

3. Yea, though God do lay me by for the present, yet he may use me afterward. God did make use of Joseph, but he first laid him by; God did make use of Moses but he first laid him by; God did make use of David, but did he not first lay him by? And if Barnabas, the companion of Paul, were the same person with Barsabas (as some do verily believe, though the Syriac translation is plainly against it,* because the name of both was Joses or Joseph, as appears by comparing Acts i. 23, with Acts iv. 36. And because this Joses was not called Barnabas from the beginning, but named Barnabas by the apostles, Acts iv. 46): if, I say, Barnabas were the same with Barsabas, then it appears plainly, that God doth not always lay a man by, to use him no more, for what abundance of service Barnabas did, the book of the Acts doth declare; yet he was first laid by, in the choice that was between him and Matthew, for the lot fell on Matthew; yet Barnabas is sent out afterwards by the church, Acts xi. 22, and by God himself, Acts xiii. 2, and much service he did do for God: so that though God do lay me by for the present, yet he may use me afterwards.

4. And if a man may be employed for God in some special service, yet may go to hell when all is done; and a man may not be employed, and yet go to heaven afterward: then why should you be discouraged, because you are not so employed? Now what think ye of those which ye read of in Matthew vii, they say at the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, cast out devils in thy name and done many wonderful works in thy name?" Works and great works, and many, and wonderful, they did and all in the name of Christ; yet he will say to them, "Depart from me, for I never knew you; or I know you not." Yea, did not

* Quidam eundem putant.—Emman. Sa. Alp. Salmeron, in Acts i. Vide Transl. Syriac in Acts xv. 22.

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our Saviour Christ say concerning Judas, "I have chosen twelve, and one of you is a devil?" A devil, yet an apostle; what greater work, service, or employment, than the work of an apostle? yet possibly a man may be an apostle in regard of employment, and a very devil in regard of life. On the other side, how many good and gracious men are there in the world, who were never used, or called forth unto any special service, such as are now in heaven, and shall be so unto all eternity? What then, though you be not employed, or used as others are; yet surely you have no just cause or reason to be discouraged in this respect.

5. And if it be the property of a good man to rejoice in the service of others; then why should you be discouraged, because others are employed, and you not? A godly man doth mourn for another's sin, as well as for his own, because he mourns for sin as sin, and as a dishonor unto God: so he rejoices in the service of another, as well as in his own, because he rejoices in the work itself, and because God is honoured. You would have God's cart to be driven through your gate. Why? is it not because you may have some toll thereby? Paul said, "However, Christ is preached, and therefore I rejoice;" and if Christ's work be done, whose hands soever the work comes through, why should you not rejoice? And if it be your duty to rejoice, then surely you have no scripture ground and reason for your discouragement in this regard.

But I am not discouraged, because I do want employment, or service; I have more work lies upon my shop-board, than I can turn my hand unto: but I have a great deal of work to do, and I have no skill to do it: oh, I want abilities, I want sufficiencies, I do want endowments; therefore I am thus discouraged, and have I not cause and reason now?

No: for God's greatest works, are not always done by the greatest parts and most choice abilities. Gideon did a great work for God in his generation, yet saith he, Judges vi. 15, "Oh, my Lord wherewith shall I save Israel? behold my family is poor in Manasseth, and I am least in my father's house:" as if he should say, If this great work be done, it must be done by some strong and potent family or person; but as for me, I am the least in my father's house, and my father's house is the least in Manasseth; yet, saith the Lord to him,

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"I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite Midian as one man." I have read in scripture, that the people have been too many, and the means too strong for God to work by; but I never read that it was too small, or weak for God to work by. God saith, "Who hath despised the day of small things? And if he will not have us to despise the day of his small things, surely he will not despise the day of our small things. Did not the weakness of the apostles overcome the strength of all the world? Who doth not see what weighty buildings God hath sometimes laid upon our laths? He is able to make as great a hole with his needle, as with our bodkin.

Our best abilities for God's work, are from the breathings of the Spirit of God. Water is weak in itself, but when the wind blows upon it, how strong is it. So, if the Spirit of God breathe upon us, we are strong, though in ourselves as weak as water: "Not by might, nor by strength, but by the Spirit of the Lord," saith Zechariah. And if ye look upon that great service of the re-building of the temple, when they came out of Babylon, ye shall find, that so long as they went forth in the strength of outward powers, the command of Cyrus, and the like, they were much hindered, and the enemies then caused the work of the Lord to cease; but when the Lord stirred up the spirit of Haggai, Zechariah, Zerrubbabel, and others to build, then they went on and prospered; Why? Because they went forth in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord; not in the strength of man's command, or of their own abilities.

Though the work of the Lord be carried on, not by might nor by strength, but by the Spirit; yet this Spirit doth not always breathe and work alike: Christ sent out his disciples for to preach, to cast out devils, and by the Spirit of the Lord, they did preach, and cast out devils; yet they had not then received so great a measure of the Spirit as afterwards, when he breathed on them, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" yea, and though he did thus breathe upon them when he left them, yet they did not then receive in so great a measure of the Spirit as afterwards; for they were still to wait for the promise, that is, the Spirit, Acts i.; so that though God will carry on his own work, by his own strength and by his own Spirit, yet the assistance thereof, is not al-

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ways alike; sometimes it is more and sometimes it is less; even where it falls in truth and power.

But though the Spirit doth not always work alike, yet if God call you to any work or service, you shall have so much assistance as is needful for you; only you must know, that *Dabitur in hora*, it shall be given in that hour, it shall not lie cold and stale by you; but when you come to use it, then it shall be given out unto you, more or less, but sufficient. Before Moses came to his work, he complained of want of abilities, his stammering tongue, and want of eloquence, &c., but when he was warm at his work, and was engaged in it, then we read of no such complaints: God's call, is our wall and strength, "Go in this thy might," saith God to Gideon; and what might was that? the verse tells you, it was the might of his call; for says the Lord in the next words, "Have not I sent thee?" Judges vi. 14. Our might then, is in God's call, not in our own abilities: and a little warm assistance, is better than much cold and stale ability.

But I fear the Lord hath not called me to this work, but that I am an intruder into the work of the Lord, because I do want abilities.

Nay, but if the Lord do sometimes call a man first, and doth furnish him with abilities afterward, then you have no reason to make such conclusions. Now ye know how it was with Saul; God did first call him, and then he gave him another spirit; he had not that other ruling spirit, before he was called to rule, but after. So the apostles were first called to their office, and then Christ did furnish them with abilities, "Who hath made us able, or meet ministers, not of the letter," &c. When were they made meet, or able? what, before they were called! No, but afterwards. God's call is not like to man's, man's call doth always pre-suppose abilities, God's call doth sometimes bring them.

And if God's porters, whom he hath set to keep the door of opportunity, do judge you able, then you are to rest in their judgment; "A large, and effectual door is opened," says Paul. God hath a door, which when he calls a man to work, he doth then open to him: this door is kept by certain porters, whom God hath appointed to keep the same, and if they judge that you have abilities, then are you to rest and acquiesce therein; for though I am to judge of mine own

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grace, and not another; yet others are to judge of my gifts, and abilities, and not my self. Some will judge of their own gifts and of others' graces; this is evil, but in reference to work and external service, others are to judge of mine abilities and not myself; as I am to judge of mine internal grace, and not another. Accordingly, Luther counselled Spalatinus, who having many sad thoughts of leaving his ministry: This is, saith Luther to him, a diabolical temptation, and you know not now, why you are afflicted with it; we which are spectators, know it better, therefore you ought rather to trust us than yourself, who in the Lord, before the Lord, yea, the Lord by us, doth exhort you to go on in your work, unto which he hath called you. So say I now to you, you doubt of your call because you do want abilities; but do those porters judge you able, who are set to judge? then are you in this case, rather to rest in their judgment, than in your own. Now God's porters have judged you meet for his work, and have opened the door of opportunity to you; and therefore you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect; only remember this: That the weaker your legs are, the faster you must hold on the hand of free grace.

Oh, but I fear that I am not called to this work, but that I am an intruder, because I meet with so many difficulties in my way.

Do you meet with difficulties in your way; what virtue or virtuous action is there but hath some stone upon it? *Nulla virtus sine lapide;* there is no virtue but hath some stone or other that is rolled upon it. As Christ himself had a stone rolled on him, so every work of Christ, and truth of Christ, and way of Christ, hath one stone or other that is rolled upon it. Yet ye must know that there is a pearl lying under that stone, and the heavier the stone is, the more precious is the pearl; the harder the nut and shell is to crack, the sweeter is the kernel; and in due time Christ will send his angel to roll away the stone from your work and his service, and that before you are aware.* When the women said, as being at a stand, and not knowing what to do, Who shall roll away the stone? then did the angel come, and rolled it away for them

* Nisi ipse elevasset lapidem non inventa fuisset sub eo hæc margarita.—Heb. Prov.

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before they were aware of it. Peter had the brazen gates opened for him when he came to them; they did not stand open before, but when he came at them, then did they open to him. And if you go on in your way and work which God doth lead you to, the brazen gates which are now shut against you shall then open to you; if, I say, you go on in your work in way of faith, as following the conduct of the Lord.

And if God's clearest call to a work hath always been followed with the greatest difficulty, then have you no reason to question your call in regard of difficulties. Now I pray tell me, when Moses went to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, had not he a clear call for that: yet what abundance of difficulties did he meet with in his way to it? And when the Jews came out of Babylon, did they not meet with many difficulties: some at their coming out, some in their way, some at the building of the temple; yet had they not a call, and a clear call thereunto? Without all doubt they had. Surely, then, you may have a call, and a clear call to your work and service, yet you may meet with many difficulties in your way, and therefore have no reason to be discouraged in this respect.

But I am not troubled, afflicted, or discouraged in regard of my call; for I am persuaded that God hath called me to his work and service: but I am most unserviceable; I do not do that work and service which I am called unto; I lie like a dry log or chip in the family and place where I live. Oh! I am most unserviceable, and therefore I am thus discouraged.

That is ill indeed; for every good and gracious man is a serviceable man, more or less he is serviceable in his place and condition. Onesimus, before converted, was unprofitable; but being converted, now profitable, says the apostle. A good man, in scripture, is compared to those things that are most profitable. Is the wicked compared to the green bay tree, which doth bring forth no fruit: the godly is compared to the olive tree, which is all profitable; the fruit profitable, the leaves, bark and the tree profitable. Is a wicked man compared to the goat: a good man is compared to the sheep; and what is in a sheep not profitable? its flesh is profitable, its wool profitable, its skin is profitable, yea its very dung is profitable: and such a sheep was Paul; nothing in

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Paul not profitable and serviceable: will ye instance in his jewish and natural privileges? he makes use of them, Phil. 3, to advance the righteousness and knowledge of Christ; yea, "all these (says he) I count as dung and dross in regard of Christ." Will ye instance in his conversion to Christ? he doth make use of that to convert others, and to establish others, by frequently telling the story of it to others. Will ye instance in his parts, gifts and learning? he makes use of his Hebrew sometimes, sometimes of his knowledge in the heathen poets, sometimes of his knowledge in the Roman customs.* Will ye instance in his friendship, acquaintance, and interest in men? that he makes use of with Philemon, from Christ, in the case of Onesimus. Will ye instance in his afflictions? he doth make use of them to persuade his people to their duty: "I Paul, a prisoner of Christ, do beseech you," &c. Will ye instance in his temptations? he doth make use of them, and tells the Corinthians how he was buffeted by Satan. Will ye instance in his sins? he doth improve them also for the advancement of God's grace: "I was a blasphemer, &c. (saith he) but I obtained mercy." Thus, ye see, there was nothing in Paul not profitable, he was all over serviceable and profitable; and if ye be one of these sheep, you will be serviceable and profitable in your place and condition, more or less. I remember the speech of a martyr, when he came to die, and to be burnt for Christ, Oh, said he, thus long have I grown in the orchard of Christ, and have borne some fruit, though not much, yet some; and now that I grow old and dry, and can bear fruit no longer, shall I be taken and thrown into the chimney, to make a fire for the warming of others: what a great mercy and blessing is this! Ye know what Solomon saith, "Whatever thou findest in thy hand to do, do it with all thy might:" and what Jeremiah saith, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." Art thou therefore unprofitable, unserviceable? then have you cause to be humbled. Yet even in this respect you are not to be cast down or discouraged, for, either you are unserviceable because you want abilities, or,

* Του γαρ ζενος ισμεν.—Acts xvii. 28. Aratus.

Φθειρουσιν ηθη κρηστα ομιλιαι κα και.—1 Cor. xv. 33. Menander.

Κρητες αει ψευσται κακα θηρια γασερες αργοι.—Titus i. 12. Epimenides.

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because ye want will and heart thereunto. If you say you want abilities, I have spoken to that already. If you say you are unwilling and do want heart thereunto, then why do you thus complain? he that complains of his own unserviceableness is not unwilling to serve the Lord. But you complain, and say, Oh, I am most unserviceable; therefore you are willing, and have an heart to serve; and if you can speak in truth with Samuel, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant is ready to obey;" then you are not unwilling to serve the Lord. Now cannot you say thus in truth? Yes, through grace I am able to say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant is ready to obey. Surely, then, you are not unwilling; this your unserviceableness doth not arise only from your unwillingness and want of heart; and therefore you have no just reason to be discouraged in this respect.

But this is not the matter which doth pinch with me; for according to my poor abilities I have laboured, and have been truly willing to serve the Lord in my generation; but I labour, work, and take pains, and all in vain: I labour, and have no success in my labour; I work, and have no success in work; I serve, and have no success in my service; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for possibly you may be mistaken in the matter of success: you may have good and great success and not know thereof. There is a time when the seed doth lie dead under the clods; and saith our Saviour, "Unless the seed dies, it abides alone." Should the husbandman complain in this time that he hath no success in his sowing? If the devil do oppose by the world without, and assault you with temptations within, it argues that there is good success, though you know it not. Now, does not the world oppose you; and does not the devil assault you with temptations, discouraging you for want of success? Yes, that he doth. Then there is some good success, though for the present it be hidden from your eyes. This is a certain sign, said Luther to Spalatinus, that your work is neither ungrateful to God, nor unprofitable to the church, in that you are troubled with these temptations; for if it were unpleasing to God, you would rather long after it, as they do that run before they be sent. Whereas Satan, when he finds such as are truly sent by God, and

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pleasing to him, he makes them a weary of their work by these and the like temptations.

And if God's own dearest children have sometimes laboured or toiled all their night or day, and have caught nothing, then no new thing doth befal you in case you want success. Now ye know, and have read, how it was with Noah; an hundred and twenty years he preached to the old world, and not one soul was saved but his own family, eight persons, in the ark. Did not Jeremiah, also, toil in his day and night, and what did he catch? Read what he says, Jer. vi. 29, "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away: reprobate silver shall men call them." Yea, doth not Christ himself say, Isa. xlix., "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought:" and do you think to fare better in this case than Noah, Jeremiah, Christ himself?* I confess the want of success in our work, is a great temptation, even one of the greatest temptations; yet if God will have me lay out my strength in vain, why should I be discouraged! The good physician doth not lose his fee, though the patient die; nor shall you lose your reward though ye have no success.

Yet this is not the thing which doth trouble me; for I acknowledge that I have been entrusted with many services, and God hath called me to them; I have been willing thereunto, and have had some good success, but when I look into the Scripture, I find that some have been employed in way of judgment, as Nebuchadnezzar; others in way of mercy, as Nehemiah, &c. Some, again, have been employed in way of mercy to others, as Cyrus, and Judas, but not in love and mercy to themselves; others have been employed in way of mercy to themselves and others too, as Paul, and Peter, &c. Now I fear that either I have been employed in a way of judgment, or that I have not been employed in a way of love and mercy to myself, but for others; and therefore I am thus discouraged and cast down, have I not just cause and reason now?

No: for if God have employed you, and trusted you in his service in a way of love and mercy to yourself, as well as to others, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this res-

* Cogitent sibi hanc causam cum Christo communem esse.—Calvin.

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pect. Now, when doth God employ a man in a way of love and mercy to himself, as well as for others' good?

When a man's heart is thereby drawn out with love to God. That which ends in love, comes from love; that which ends in your love to God, came from God's love to you. So in outward blessings, if they end in your love to God, then they came from God's love to you. So in the matter of afflictions, if I do love God the more by them, then did they come from God's love to me. So also in the matter of employments, if you do love God by them, and they do end in your love to God, then they came from God's love to you.

When God doth employ a man in his service, in a way of love and mercy to him, then he doth more or less acquaint him with his design therein; and if God do acquaint me with his design in his work, then he doth employ me in a way of love to me. He employed the Assyrian as a rod in his hand, to scourge the people of Israel; but they knew not God's design, they went on upon their own design. Therefore saith the prophet Isaiah, in the name of the Lord, chapter x. 6, "I will send him against an hypocritical nation, howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy nations, not a few." The Lord employed Peter to open a door to the Gentiles in the conversion of Cornelius, and though he knew not God's design at the first, yet he did fully know it afterwards; for says he, and the rest, "Now hath God also to the Gentiles, granted repentance unto life."

When a man is employed in a way of special love to his own soul, he hath high thoughts of his employment, but low thoughts of his own actings under it; therefore said John the Baptist, "I indeed baptize you with water, but there is one comes after me, he shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, whose shoe-latchet I am unworthy to unloose." But though the employment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, was good and honourable, yet they had low thoughts thereof, and high thoughts of their own actings, Numb. xvi. 3; for said they to Moses and Aaron, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy:" as if they should say, We are as good as you. Why so? Even because they

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were not employed in mercy to their own souls, but for others' good.

He that is employed and used in a way of love and mercy, is very tender of the name of God, and doth so act and work as the name of God may not suffer, or be defiled by him. Thus it was with Ezra, though the enemy lay in his way to Judea, yet he would not ask a convoy of the king; for says he, "I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken to the king, saying, the hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." Now Ezra was a good man, a man that God did call forth to this employment, not only out of love to others, but to himself; and thus did he act for God, being more careful of God's name in the work, than of their own safety.

When a man is employed in a way of love and mercy to his own soul also, then he doth grow in grace while he is exercising of his gift. A man that exerciseth a gift for the good of others only, grows in parts, and in pride also; but a good man grows in experience, and so he doth grow in faith: he meets with difficulties and deliverances, so he doth grow in faith; God discovers himself to him in the way, so he still grows in faith, love and holiness. God gives him a promise when he sends him forth, as he did give to Joshua, chap. i.; this he looks much upon, and goes forth in the strength of, and so as he uses his gift in his work, he doth grow in grace thereby, but the other doth not.

He makes no great outward bargain of God's service, neither doth he labour to pocket up much for himself. God employed Moses in a great work, but where do you read of any great estate that he got for himself? We read of Joshua, that when he had brought the children of Israel into Canaan, and divided the land by lot to them, then when he had served others, in the last place he did serve himself, and that in no great matter. What did Nehemiah get by his service? Not as the former governors did. Why? Because he feared the Lord. So then, if a man be employed in way of love and mercy to himself, he doth not make his employment a shoeing-horn to his own preferment. It is enough for me my Master's work is done, saith he; neither

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doth God use to pay them all their wages here, whom he employs in mercy to themselves. But as a merchant, if he have to deal with a stranger for a less commodity, he pays him down presently; but if with a friend for some great priced commodity, he takes time, and doth not pay down his money presently. So, if God have to do with a stranger, as Nebuchadnezzar, he will pay him wages presently; but if God deals with a friend, whom he employs in mercy to himself, then he doth put off his full payment till afterwards.

He doth God's work without any great noise or notice of himself, like Christ, "He lifts not up his voice in the street," and as the angels in Ezek. i., his hands are under his wings; he hath four hands to work with, but they are not seen, they are under his wings. "Let your light so shine before men, (says Christ,) that they may see your good works, (not yourselves,) and glorify your Father," not yourselves. As it is with the fisher, so with him; he shews the bait, but hides himself; he holds forth the word of truth, but not himself; though he have four hands to work with, yet they are all under his wings, hidden; but says Jehu, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts." This is another difference.

If God do use and employ a man in a way of love and mercy to himself, he is willing to be used, and contented to be laid by and to be used no more. Another man is not so, if he have been used in one thing, he thinks he must be used in other things, and when he hath done, he cannot bear that God should lay him by and use another. Thus it was with Saul, he could not be contented that God should use David. But when God told Eli, that he would lay him and his house by, he answered, "Good is the word of the Lord;" for he was a good man, and one whom God had used in love and mercy to himself, and so when God had done with him, he was content therewith.

He that is used and employed in a way of love and mercy to himself, will do the work of the Lord fully, though he do his own works by halves. Caleb did his own works by halves, and the work of God fully; for he was used in mercy to himself and others. Jehu did the work of the Lord by halves, and his own work fully; for though he was used in mercy to some, and judgment to others, yet not in love to himself.

When God doth use a man in a way of judgment, he hath ordinarily more skill at pulling down, and destroying what is

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man's, than in setting up and building what is God's. But when God doth use him in a way of love and mercy to his own soul, he hath a dexterity in, and a heart to the setting up of what is God's; witness Jehu on the one hand, and Nehemiah on the other hand. How is it therefore with thee? Hast thou a skill at pulling down what is man's, and no skill nor heart to set up what is God's? Hast thou been employed and used in God's service, and have you done your own work fully, and God's work by halves? Art thou not contented to be laid by, and that God should use another? Dost thou make a noise in the work, and thy hands not under thy wings? Hast thou made a goodly outward bargain of the Lord's work, and his service as a shoeing-horn to thine own ends? Hast thou not grown in experience, faith and holiness, by this work, but in pride rather? Hast thou not been very tender of the name of God in thy service; nor been acquainted with God's design; nor thine heart drawn out the more to love the Lord? Then surely God hath not used or employed thee in love and mercy to thine own soul. But if thine heart have been drawn out with love to God by thy very service and employments, and thou hast been in some measure acquainted with God's design in that service, and hast been very tender of the name of God, and more willing to hazard thyself than to defile his name, and hast grown in grace by the exercise of thy gifts, and hast made no bargain of the Lord's service, but hast had thy hands under thy wings, and hast not done God's work by halves, and now after all, art contented that God shall lay thee by, and make use of others; then surely the Lord hath used and employed thee in a way of love and mercy to thine own soul; and therefore why shouldest thou be discouraged in this respect? Certainly you have no just cause or true reason for it.

But suppose that the Lord either shall not use me in his service, or if he do, that difficulties and oppositions press in upon me, or that I meet with no success in my work according to my desire, what shall I do, that I may be able to bear up my heart against all discouragements in this kind?

In case that God do not call you forth to any work or special employment. Then,

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Consider that you have now the more time to mind your own soul, and to attend to your own condition. Some are so employed, that they have not time enough to pray, read, meditate, examine their own hearts, and to look into their own condition. Yea, though a man's work do lie in the ministry, it is possible that he may so mind his public work, as to neglect his private. But now, if thou hast no public employment or service, then you have the more time for to spend upon your own soul, the more time to converse with the Lord in private, and to look into your own condition.

And if you be not called forth to work, and yet are willing to work, you shall be paid for that work and service which you never did. As some men shall be punished for those sins which they did never commit in the gross act, because they were willing and had a desire to commit the same. So some shall be paid for that work and service for God, which they never did perform, because they were willing to have done the same. Now, is it not a great mercy to be paid for that work which I never did? Such is the privilege of all those that are not called to service, and yet are willing to it.

In case that you are employed in God's work and service, and difficulties press in upon you; then,

Consider that the greater the difficulty is, the greater shall your obedience be in carrying on the work; and the more you do follow after duty, and redeem it from the hand of difficulty, the greater shall your comfort and reward be when all is done.

And the more that any service, work, or duty, is oppressed with difficulty, the more assistance may you expect from God; his assistance, help, and income, is given out much according to the difficulties which we do meet withal. If the difficulties be small, then his assistance is less; if the difficulties be great, than is his assistance greater. Now what matter what the difficulties are, so long as my assistance is suitable? This is God's way with his, he doth proportion his assistance unto our impediments. And therefore if your difficulties be great, and more than ordinary, then may you look for great and more than ordinary assistance. Oh, what a comfort is this!

In case that you work, and serve, and toil, and do take

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nothing, having no success, or not so comfortable as you desire; then,

Consider this, that the less success you have, the more are you free from envy. It is a hard thing for a man that works not, not to envy him that works; and for him that hath no success, not to envy him that hath great success. Of all men in the world, the successful man is the most envied. The heathens had this notion amongst them, which they applied to their gods; and therefore when Polycrates, king, or rather tyrant of Samos, prospered so abundantly in all that he undertook, Amasis, the king of Egypt, his friend and confederate, wrote thus to him:* "That thou doest well and prosper, is no small joy to me; but I must tell thee plainly, that these great and overflowing successes do not please me, who know full well the nature of the gods, how envious they are. It is my wish concerning myself, and the like I wish for all my friends, sometimes to prosper and sometimes to miscarry; and in this vicissitude rather to pass my life, than without any alteration to prosper; for I never yet could hear of any who having thus prospered long, did not at the last, end in universal destruction." Which he imputed to the envy of their gods; for their gods were devils; and indeed, what is the reason that the successful men in any kind are the most envied by the world, but because the Devil (who is the envious one) doth provoke thereunto? Yea, always so it is, that success doth raise envy.† Hast thou therefore been at work and hast had no success, then shall you be the more free from envy.

Hereby also you are kept from that great temptation of resting on your own labours. As we are very apt to rest on our duties, sufferings and enjoyments; so we are very apt to rest on our own labours and employments. That we may not rest on our duties, God doth sometimes suspend our duty, or our heart in it. That we may not rest on our spiritual enjoyment, God doth sometimes suspend that also. So here. What is the reason that God doth put the sentence of death upon our employments, or doth suspend their success, but that we may be kept from resting on our labours?

* Ω δε λεγει. &c.—Herodotus.

† Fructus honos oneris, fructus honoris onus.

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Were our labours more successful, we should rest more upon them, but by want of success we are weaned from them. This is comfort even in the want of comfort.

But in this case, why should not that comfort and support us, which did comfort and support Christ himself? Isa. xlix. 2, ye read of his call to his work: "The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother he hath made mention of my name." Here is his clear call to work, verse 2, ye have his divine assistance, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft in his quiver." Then verse 4, ye have his want of success expressed in many words: "Then said I, I have laboured in vain." Is that all? No: "I have spent my strength for nought." But is that all? No: "and in vain" again. Then at verse 6, God the Father comforts him against this discouragement: "And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob: I have given thee for a light to the Gentiles." Though thou hast little success in this work amongst the Jews, thou shalt have great success in a greater. But wherein doth Christ comfort himself in this case of no success in his work amongst the Jews? That we have in verse 4: "Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Whatever judgment men do make, it matters not much, for "my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." I have done the work which God gave me to do, and therein I have approved myself unto God; and therefore though I have laboured in vain and spent my strength for nought, yet I have comfort in my work, for my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God; I have not lost my labour, for my work is with God. And thus may you also comfort yourself in the want of success; true, I have laboured in vain as to others, but not in vain to myself; I have lost my labour as to others, but not as to my God; for my reward is with God, and though I have spent my strength for nought in regard of men, yet my work is with my God; and in all this work I have approved myself unto him; and therefore whatever the success be, yet will not I be discouraged; for my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.*

* Proprie autem dici non potest quod Christus frustra laboravit ne quidem

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And thus I have done with this eighth instance, whereby it doth appear that a good man hath no reason or cause to be discouraged in regard of his work or service, however it may fare with him therein.

SERMON XII.

A LIFTING UP IN CASE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS DRAWN FROM THE CONDITION ITSELF.

"*Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?*" &c.—Psalm xlii. 11.

IX. SOMETIMES the discouragements of God's people are drawn from their condition, the condition itself.

Oh, saith one, my condition is exceeding sad, both for soul and body; there is no condition that is like to mine: my affliction and my condition are twisted and woven in together; my affliction, misery, and my calamity are seated in my very condition: they do not only grow upon my condition, but are in the condition itself, and therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No: I will grant and must confess, it is possible that a godly man's condition in regard of outwards, may be very bad, *Cum bene sit malis, et male bonis;* when it goes well with those that are bad, and ill with those that are good, I am strongly solicited to believe there is no God, said the heathen: but we have learned better divinity than this. A man's condition may be very bad, and yet the man himself may be very good, and God may be good to him. Yea,

respectu judæorum tum quod Christus omnium conversionem vere non intendit sed tantum eorum quos efficacitur convertere voluit qui principaliter sunt electi tum quod opus predicationis Christi apud eos qui non erant convertendi, usum suum tamen habuit vel quod erat futurum hoc illis in testimonium in die judicii vel quod ad consolationem nostram id fecit ut videlicet predicatores non nimium dolerant et animum abjicerent si semen ab illis projectum aliquando viderent in animis audientium non fructificare. *Estius in Loc.*

Sensus igitur hoc loco sio esse poterit; consumpsi frustra vires, &c. quasi, dicat; non est quod quisquam existimet id circo me frustra laborasse, quod non missus venerim aut aliter atque oporteret rem tractarim in aliquove deliquerim conditio (sic enim significat משפט) studia et actiones omnes me sic significat מעלה) imo omnia mea a Deo meo a patre omnium Deo disposita et ordinata fuere. *Forerius in Esai. cap.* 49.

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It is possible that a godly man's condition in regard of the world, may be worser than the condition of a wicked man; for what else is the meaning of the parable of Dives and Lazarus? Jacob was driven out of his father's house and lodged in the open fields, in the night, whilst wicked Esau, profane Esau, stayed at home, and lay in his warm bed: ye do not read that ever Esau did serve so hard a service in Laban's house as Jacob did, nor are ye able to parallel Esau's misery with Jacob's; yet saith the Lord, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." So that it is possible for a good and godly man's condition, in regard of the world, to be worser than the condition of the wicked. Yea,

It is possible that a godly man's condition may be worser in regard of outwards, after his conversion, worser I say, than before his conversion. Grace is fain sometimes to wear sin's clothes; and a gracious man, sometimes, doth wear the punishment of that sin which he hath committed before his conversion. What think you of Paul? Do you read that ever Paul before his conversion was put into the stocks; that he was whipped up and down the streets like a rogue; that he was imprisoned; that he was stoned by his countrymen? But after his conversion he was so used. In the beginning of that xixth chapter of the Acts, he breathed out threatenings against the saints, and goes out to kill the people of God; but no sooner is Paul converted, but the Jews sought to kill him: so that I say, possibly a gracious man's condition, in regard of outwards may be worser, at least for a time, than it was before he was converted and drawn to God.

But now, take a godly man's condition, and though it be never so sad, yet there is no reason why he should be discouraged or cast down because of his condition, in itself considered. For,

1. By way of demonstration. If his condition be carved out unto him by the hand of his Father, who is of infinite wisdom and love; then he hath no reason to complain, or to be disquieted. Now look into Psalm xvi, see what David saith of Christ, and Christ of the saints, at verse 6, "My lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place; yea, I have a fair heritage," or a goodly heritage; Why? (verse 5.) "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."

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Three things are most considerable here. First, these words are plainly spoken of our Lord and Saviour Christ, and of his great sufferings, as appears by verse 10. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." "Men and brethren, (saith the apostle in Acts ii. 29.) let me speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day; therefore being a prophet and God had sworn unto him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;" he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ. At the 27th verse of the iind chapter ye have the same words that you have here in Psalm xvi, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." So that plainly the words of the Psalm are spoken of Christ, and of his great sufferings. But now in the second place; though his sufferings were very great and many, yet saith he, "My lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place, and I have a goodly heritage;" but why so? The reason is, in the third place, in verse 5, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup;" the Lord, my Father, saith he, hath drawn out my lines for me, he hath measured out my condition and the Lord himself is my portion and the portion of mine inheritance. Thus now, may every godly man say; my lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place, yea, I have a goodly heritage. Why? for the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: surely, therefore, he hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever his condition be. Again.

2. If a man do not live upon his condition itself, but upon his call into his condition; then he hath no reason to be discouraged in regard of his condition itself. Now as our Lord and Saviour Christ said, "Man lives not by bread but by every word of God;" so say I, man lives not upon his condition, but upon God's call into his condition; and if God call a man into a condition, he will maintain him in it: therefore you find these two go together, in Psalm xvi, "Thou maintainest my lot;" at the latter end of verse 5, "And my lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place." And thus it was with the children of Israel, when they went through the Red Sea; it is said, "The waters stood like a wall on each side

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of them ;" ye never read before of a wall of water, and yet then the waters were as a wall unto them ; a strange kind of wall, made of waters: but saith the text, " the waters were as a wall," stood as a wall on each side of them. Beloved, God's call is our wall, which will bear off, and bear up one's heart under troubles and discouragements. Oh, saith a gracious soul, what abundance of opposition do I meet withal in my condition ; but yet the Lord hath called me into this condition, and therefore I am quiet, I am contented, I am satisfied; I confess I did not think to have met with so much affliction in my condition as now I do; but God hath called me into it, and therefore I have comfort. Thus it is with all the saints, they are led by God's call into their condition, and they can shew their patent, they can say, Here is my call. Now, if a man do not live upon the condition itself, but upon God's call into his condition ; and God doth call his people into whatsoever condition they are; then they have no reason to be discouraged by reason of their condition. Again,

3. If there be no condition that a godly man can fall into, but there is some mercy that is mixed with it, and Jesus Christ hath paid for that too, then a man hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever his condition be. Now you know what Solomon saith : " Shall a living man complain ? is not a living dog better than a dead lion ?" Some mercy still that is mixed with misery, and Jesus Christ hath paid the reckoning; godly men have nothing to pay, not anything to pay. Suppose you were invited to a great feast, and some of the dishes were not so well dressed or cooked up as you desire, would you find fault; would you complain ? No; why ? Because this feast doth cost me nothing. The master of the feast may find fault, but I am a guest and it cost me nothing, and therefore I have no reason to complain. Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is the great master of the feast, and of all the comforts which you have, and he hath paid all your reckoning, there is nothing for you to pay ; and if you bring in your prayers, your tears, your obedience, as matter of payment, they will not be taken ; no, saith Christ, I have paid all myself, witness these empty purses, these empty veins of mine; as for you, O my friends, ye are welcome, but you have nothing to pay, not a penny, not a farthing. I say there is no condition that a godly man can

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fall into, but there is some mercy that is mixed withal, and Christ hath paid the reckoning for the mercy too; surely then, the people of God have no reason to be discouraged by reason of their condition.

But (will some say) I am in a poor, low, mean, base and despised condition, and therefore I am thus disquieted; as for those that are in a prosperous estate and condition, they may well bear up their heads and be of good comfort. Rich men indeed and those that are in a prosperous condition, have many opportunities of serving God, publicly and privately, which a poor man hath not; they have time to frequent the ordinances in the week, to converse much with God in private, whilst the poor man is fain to be at work for his living, and glad he can get his living too; there is no man knows the misery of a poor condition but those that are in it. And such is my condition, and therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No. For whosoever you are that speak or think thus, do you know what the burden of prosperity is? You see a town sometimes upon the side of a hill, and you say, what a fine town is there, what pleasant meadows are about it, what excellent woods, what clean ways unto it. Thus you speak at a distance. But when you draw near unto this town, and go through some of the lanes, you find them very dirty, and then you say, I did not think at a distance, that there had been such a dirty lane about this town; I saw nothing but fine and clean meadows when I was at a distance, I did not think there had been such dirty passages to it. So, when you look upon prosperity at a distance, you think there is no dirty lanes, no foul passages to it and from it; but when you come near unto it, then you find many a dirty passage, and you say, Oh, what dirty sloughs are here! The truth is, the more prosperous (I speak now of outward prosperity) a man's condition is, the more opportunities he hath of doing and receiving good. But if you look into Numbers iv., you shall find that every opportunity of service carries a burden with it; and therefore the service of the Levites, is often, and in many verses of the chapter called a burden; I will name but one, which is the last: "According to the commandment of the Lord, they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his

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burden." Service and burden do here go together; burden and service, service and burden. And now poor soul, is it a burden to you, that you are freed from a burden; hath not our Lord and Saviour Christ said, and do you not find it in experience, "That the poor receive the gospel?" Is not a living sprig of a tree better than a dead arm? The poor hen, you know, so long as she lives is upon the dunghill, and there she is scraping, and picking up her living; but when she is dead, then she is brought unto the master's table. The hawk on the contrary, while he is living, is carried upon the fist, and upon the arm, and hath good flesh and provision made for him, and a house to sit in; but when the hawk dieth, then he is thrown out unto the dunghill. So in this case; so long as a poor, godly man is living here, it may be he is upon the dunghill and picking up his living, a little and a little; but when he dieth, then he is brought into his master's presence. But the rich, ungodly man when he dieth, though while he lived he had great provision, yet then he is thrown out unto the dunghill, and comes no more into his master's presence. Oh, you that are godly, though in a low condition, would you then change your condition with the wicked? The lower your coudition is, the higher is your obedience; if you submit unto the work of your condition, this is angelical obedience; for the angels, though in order of nature they are above men, yet at the command of God, they are ministering spirits unto men, attend and look to men that are much below them in nature. And the lower the work is that they do in tending men, the higher is their obedience to God. So say I; the lower the work of your condition is, the higher and more angelical is your obedience in submitting unto your condition, and to the work thereof. Luther said: A poor woman knitting of a pair of stockings in a way of faith, doth a greater work than Alexander did in conquering the world. It was the speech of a good man that is now in heaven: The more riches the more debts. For if a man be not in Christ, all his present riches will be future debts; he will wish: Oh, that I had less of them, oh, that I had never a penny. And I pray tell me, who have most promises in scripture? The poor or the rich? The oppressed or the oppressor? The high or the low? He that is most exercised hath the most promises; and a

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low condition is an excellent commentary upon those promises. When the sun shines, ye see not the stars; but in the night the stars appear. So, whilst prosperity shines upon us, we do not see the promises; but when the night comes, adversity comes, a dark and low condition comes, then we see those promises which we saw not before. But suppose that a father hath two children, and to one he gives a brave garment, saying unto him: Child, take and wear this garment; but there is all thy portion, I shall give thee no more. The other he gives a mean garment to, but saith he: Child, be contented, it is not thy portion; thy brother's garment is *his* portion, but though the garment be mean it is not *thy* portion, I have a good inheritance for thee. Will not this latter child be contented; will he be discouraged think you, because he hath not so brave a garment as the other hath? Why, take a wicked man, and though he have a braver garment, yet it is all his portion, his portion is in this life, there is all thou shalt have, saith God, there is thy portion. But now, as for a godly man, though he have a mean garment, yet it is not his portion. Oh, you that are godly, will you then be discouraged because you have not so brave and fine a garment as another hath? Consider that the Lord himself is your portion.*

Oh, but, I praise the Lord, I am not in a poor and low and base condition, my condition is full enough; but I am in an unsettled condition, I am never settled in my condition, sometimes in one condition, and sometimes in another; could I be but settled, though I had the lesser, I should be contented; but my condition is never settled, and therefore I am thus disquieted and discouraged; have I not some reason now?

No: for I pray, what settlement would you have here in this world? The best estate of men is altogether vanity; is there any settlement in vanity? "Verily (saith the Psalmist)

*Luc. 6.—Væ vobis divitibus quonium accepistis hic consolationem vestram: non simpliciter dicit Christus quoniam consolationem recipitis in hac vita sed addit vestram quasi ista sit ipsorum portio, ultra quam nihil illis boni sit expectandum amplius unde in græco pulchre positum est ὁτι απεχεῖε την παρακλησιν ὑμων.—Musculus in Matth. 5. p. 67.

Non est simplex verbum ἰχεῖε sed compositum απεχιτε significat autem απεχειν non tamen simpliciter recipere et habere, sed portionem solatii sui jam accepisse et jam habere, ut postea nullam aliam et nihil amplius vel, petere possit vel expectare debeat.—Chemmit. Harm. cap 50. p. 542.

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the best estate of every man, (or every man in his best estate) is altogether vanity;" so you read it: but in the Hebrew it is, every man standing, *Omnis homo stans,* as Montanus gives it, every man in his most settled estate, so the word signifies; "Verily every man in his most settled estate is altogether vanity."*

But suppose that your condition be more unsettled than any others; if God hath no design but love upon you in your unsettlement, then surely you have no reason to be disquieted because of this. Now, I pray, why doth the Lord suffer the condition of his people to be so unsettled in the world, but that they may settle upon himself? Oh, saith a gracious heart, I see there is no abiding place here, therefore I look for one that is to come, that hath a foundation: had I been settled in the world, I should never have been fixed upon God himself; but being unsettled in the world, I learn to settle upon God himself: God doth therefore carry his children from vessel to vessel, from condition to condition, that their filthy scent may not remain. Beloved, there is no condition here below, that is able to grasp, or hold the love of God to his children; every condition is too narrow a vessel to hold the love of God in, and therefore God doth lead his people into several conditions, that so he may have the fuller vent for his love: so long as you are in one condition, you do not see or observe your own self and carriage therein, and therefore God leads you into a new condition, that you may see what you did in your former condition. For example: when a man is in health, he doth not then observe his own carriage in the days of health; therefore God leads him into sickness, and when he is sick then he doth observe what his carriage was while he was in health; then, saith he, how wanton was I, how worldly was I, how vain was I, when I was in health: but when a man is sick, then he doth not observe his carriage in that condition; therefore God leads him into health again, and when he is in health then he seeth what his carriage was while he was sick; and then, saith he, how froward was I, how impatient was I, when I was sick. I say, a man doth not observe the present carriage of his soul in his present condition, and therefore God leads him into a new condition, and then he sees what his carriage was

* אךכלחבל כל-אדם כצב רצב—Sterit, constitit, constitutus fuit.

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in the old condition. Philosophy tells us, that if a sensible object be laid close to the organ of sense, there will be no sensation ;* as if a book be held close unto your eye, you will not be able to read a letter; but hold it at a convenient disrance, and then you may read it all. So here; so long as a man is in a condition, and that is held close unto him, he doth not see his own carriage therein, but at a distance he doth; wherefore the Lord doth remove him to some distance from his former condition and so he sees and observeth what he was, and did therein. It is an easy thing for a man to sing when the Psalm is set, a child can do it; but it requires some skill to begin, it requires some singing skill to turn readily from one tune to another; but when the Psalm is begun, every one can go on then. A poor weak horse can go on in the road, so long as he keeps the same way; but when he comes to turn out of that way into another, then he stumbles; it requires some strength in a horse to go readily over the cart wracks, to go from one way into another, this requires strength. So every poor weak man, may go on in the same way, and in the same condition, this requires no great store of strength; but to carry the sameness of heart towards God in variety of conditions, this argues strength, this requires skill: what therefore if the Lord will lead you from one condition to another, and so draw out your skill and strength, and hath no design but of love upon you, will you then be discouraged? Thus it is with all the saints; surely therefore they have no reason to be cast down in this respect.

Oh, but I am not so much troubled about my outward condition, as about the condition of my soul, the Lord knows my soul's condition is very sad; for sometimes I am under the ordinances, and sometimes not; sometimes I can stir out to an ordinance, but sometimes oppositions keep me at home; I am not under a settled ordinance; and when I am under the ordinance, I get little good thereby; I hear and I do not remember, my heart is hard and dead and dull, and it is little that I profit, and therefore I am thus discouraged: have I not cause and reason now?

No, not yet. For as for your want of ordinances, if God

* Sensibili positum juxta sensorium nulla sit sensatio.

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lead you to the want of an ordinance, he will make the very want of an ordinance, to be an ordinance to you. When the children of Israel came into the land of Canaan, where there was ordinary food, then manna ceased; but when ordinary food could not be had, as in the wilderness, then they had manna, bread that was baked in the clouds; then they had angel's food immediately from God; and immediate mercies that come immediately out of the hand of God, are the sweetest mercies. God doth always give some opportunities of good unto his people; either of doing good, or receiving good; and the less opportunity they have of receiving good, usually the more opportunity they have of doing good: what though your hand be empty of receiving opportunities, yet if your hand be full of doing opportunities, have you any cause to be discouraged? God knows how to give the comfort of an ordinance in the want of an ordinance. When Jonah was in the whale's belly, he prayed, and in his prayer, he looked towards the temple, though he was absent from it, and the Lord heard his prayer. And beloved, if the Lord do remember your carriage, labour of love, longings, groanings, mournings after the ordinances, as much when you want them, as he remembers your enlargements under them; then you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now look into Psalm cxxxii., and you shall see how David presseth the Lord to remember him, verse 1, "Lord remember David and all his afflictions;" he was in great afflictions, and he desired the Lord to remember him; but under what notion would he have the Lord remember him? why saith he, remember him? "How he sware unto the Lord (verse 2,) and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eye-lids, until I have found out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." He wanted the ordinance, and his heart was restless after it; and now he desires the Lord to remember him for this. So that I say, God will in a special manner remember your carriage, labour of love, longings and groanings after ordinances when you want them. Oh, but though the Lord do remember us in due time; yet what shall we do in the mean time? Mark what follows at verse 6, "Lo, we heard of it at Ephrata, we found it in the

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fields of the woods." What is that? "Lo we heard of it at Ephrata;" we heard of it, that is, we heard of the ark (which he had spoken of before) and the habitation of the mighty God of Jacob. We heard of it at Ephrata; as if he should say, it was commonly reported and thought that the Lord, would settle his ark, and his house and habitation at Ephrata, at Bethlehem, a plentiful place; but now we have found it in the fields of the wood. Now we find that the Lord would settle his house, and his ark at Jerusalem, which is compassed about with hills full of woods; in the fields of the forest have we found it. Beloved, our eye is all upon Ephrata, upon Bethlehem, upon the plentiful place; but the Lord doth so order things in his goodness, that when he brings his people into the woods, the fields, the forest, there they find his ark, his presence, and his habitation in the midst of it. And what godly man is there, whom God hath called at any time from the ordinance, but he may say thus; lo, we heard of it at Ephrata, but we have found it in the fields of the woods; and if you do not find the presence of God and the ark of God and his habitation at Ephrata; yet if ye find him in the fields of the woods, in the barren forests; have you any cause to complain? No, surely you have not. Oh, but I am in a plentiful place for the present, I am at Ephrata; I am not in the barren fields, I am under plentiful and precious ordinances; but I do not remember, I hear, and I remember not.

Therefore ye must know, that as for your want of memory, there is an head-memory, and there is an heart-memory: some have an head-memory, whereby they are able to give an account presently of all they have heard, in their due order; but they want an heart-memory to suggest the things to them when they should use the same. Some again have an heart-memory, so as they can remember the things when they should use them; but they have no head-memory. Now if you can remember the things as you are use to them, though you forget the words and method, have you any cause to complain? Though the words heard, do depart from you, yet your heart may be kept sweet by the hearing of them. Water is often poured into a vessel, and runs out presently, yet it keeps the vessel sweet. So now, though you hear, and hear, and hear again, and you cannot remem-

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ber, and the things heard do not stay by you as you desire, yet your soul may be kept sweet thereby.

As for your deadness; it is some life to feel one's own deadness; for there is a death, and a deadness, as I may so speak. There is a life, and a liveliness; a man may be alive and yet not lively, as a sick person. So a man may be under some deadness, and yet not be dead unto death. There is a deadness that is opposite to liveliness; and there is a deadness that is opposite to life. Now you complain, Oh, my heart is dead, my heart is dead; this argues that it is but a deadness that is opposite to liveliness, else you could not feel your own deadness. A man that is stark dead, cannot feel that he is dead; I say therefore, in that you feel your own deadness, it argues, that it is but a deadness that is opposite to liveliness, and not that deadness that is opposite to life itself; and if you be alive in opposition to death, though you have a deadness in you that is opposite unto liveliness, have you any reason to be quite discouraged, and cast down? The tradesman complains that his trade is dead, and you complain that your heart is dead; this argues that your trade is there, and that your trade is in the matter of your heart.

As if your unprofitableness, and unfruitfulness under the means and ordinances, ye know that there is a difference between unfruitfulness and less fruitfulness; the good ground brings forth fruit, in some thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundred fold; thirty is less than sixty, yet this is not unfruitfulness; sixty is less fruit than an hundred fold, yet this is not barrenness. A good man may be less fruitful than another, or than he was formerly, yet he may be fruitful; and it may be thus with you. But suppose you cannot profit under the means, and be indeed unfruitful; yet there is a great deal of difference between the unfruitfulness of the good tree, and the barrennesss of the barren fig-tree. Though a good man be unfruitful, yet he is very sensible of his unfruitfulness. Oh, saith he, there is not a more barren, vile, wretched, unprofitable heart in all the world than mine: it is not so with the barren soul. Though a good man may be too unfruitful, yet he doth not cumber the ground; the barren fig-tree doth, Luke xiii., that is, he doth eat out the heart of the soil from others and doth hinder others; he

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is a cumberer to the place and family where he grows and lives: the good man is not so, but though he is unprofitable in his own eyes, yet in truth he is profitable to the souls of others. Though a good man doth not profit so much as he should and would, yet he is willing that any means should be used with him for his profit and growth, even to be digged about and dunged: "And I will dig about it and dung it." Luke xiii. Upon which words, saith Bernard: *Non refugit fœditutem medii, qui expectat fœcunditatem animæ:* dung is a means unsavory, and he that desires the growth of his grace, will not refuse the foulness of the means, that means which to flesh and blood is unsavory. Though a good man may be very unfruitful, yet God will not cut him down, he will prune him and cut him in such a time as he may grow thereby, but he will not cut him down. But the barren fig-tree, he will cut it down; cut it down, saith the owner, why should it cumber the ground any longer? But however it be, art thou unfruitful, unprofitable under the means? then have you cause to be be humbled: humble yourself therefore before the Lord your God, yet be you not discouraged.

Oh, but yet this is not my case only; for I do not barely complain of my unprofitableness under the means and ordinances (though that is much) but I fear that my spiritual condition is not right; and if my spiritual condition be not good and right, after I have lived thus long under such searching means and ministry, I fear it will never be right. I do not read in all the scripture that ever an hypocrite was converted; publicans and sinners I read of, but I do not read of an hypocrite converted; and having lived under the means of grace thus long, if now my condition be unsound, then I am a hypocrite, and indeed this I fear, and therefore I am thus discouraged; have I not cause and reason for it?

No. For though you have lien long under the means of grace, and are not converted, yet there is hope, there is hope concerning this. When our Lord and Saviour Christ rose from the dead, the stone was rolled and removed away. And when the Lord Christ doth raise up a poor soul, he will roll away the stone, though it be as heavy as death, though it be as heavy as hypocrisy, though the stone be as heavy as hell itself; yea, Christ will roll away the stone though it hath

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lien long upon you. And I pray, what think you of Paul? was not Paul a hypocrite before his conversion? "Woe to you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites," saith our Saviour; and saith Paul concerning himself, concerning the law, "I was a pharisee." Our Saviour saith that the scribes and pharisees were hypocrites; and Paul saith concerning himself, he was a pharisee and yet he was converted. There is one hypocrite then converted, and you may read of others.

But is not this usual with God's own children; do they not speak it sometimes out, that they are but hypocrites? I am but an hypocrite. Ye read of that blessed martyr, Mr. John Bradford, that being in prison, and writing to a friend, he subscribes his letter thus; Your's in Christ, a most unprofitable, hard-hearted, miserable sinner. And another letter he subscribes thus; Your's in Christ, a very painted hypocrite, John Bradford. Some there are, that think their souls are sincere, and yet they are most unsound. Some again think they are unsound, and yet they are most sincere.

But to come a little nearer, and yet I must but touch upon it; did ever hypocrite long and mourn after the presence of God in Christ, as the best thing in all the world; did ever hypocrite dwell, and abide in the work of private examination of his own soul; did ever hypocrite love grace better or more than gifts; or that most, which is the most spiritual, most savory; did ever hypocrite desire peace, and comfort for grace sake, and not rather grace for peace sake; do hypocrites ordinarily think they are hypocrites; where do you find that in the scripture, that hypocrites ordinarily think they are hypocrites? If hypocrisy be a man's burden, it is not his condition. Did ever any hypocrite walk contrary to himself, to his former self? When men were truly converted they did. So you read of Zaccheus, before he was converted, he was a great oppressor and a covetous man; but being once converted, saith he, "Lord, behold, the half of my goods I give unto the poor; and if I have wronged any man, I will restore four-fold;" here he walks contrary to himself. So the jailor, before he was converted, he imprisoned the apostles, and whipped them till the blood ran down upon their backs; but being converted, he hath them into his house, sets meat before them, and washeth their

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wounds; he walks contrary to his own former self. So Paul, before he was converted, he persecuted the saints and the gospel; after converted, then he did preach the gospel, which before he persecuted: thus he walked contrary to his former self. I have read, or heard of a young man that was given much to jeering and scoffing; and his mother being godly he would frequently jeer and scoff at his own mother; it pleased God at the last to work savingly upon him, and then he would never come into the presence of his mother, but he would fall down upon his knees, not in the morning and evening for a blessing, but whenever he came into the presence of his mother, he would fall down in a reverential way upon his knees, till she bid him stand up. I do not commend the action, but I speak this to shew, that when a man is converted, and turned to God, then he will walk contrary to himself. Now, whoever you be, that make this objection, have you not found it thus in your own souls? I appeal unto you, cannot you say thus? Indeed it is little I enjoy of God here; but the Lord knows, I do long and mourn for the presence of God in Christ, as the best thing in all the world; and I am much in the examination of mine own heart in private, when no eye doth see me; and I do desire those things most that are the most spiritual, and the most savory, those my soul closeth most with; and I do not desire grace for comfort, but I desire comfort for grace: and ah, Lord thou knowest I have gone up and down fearing for many years together, that I have been an hypocrite; I have sat down weeping and said, Oh, I am an hypocrite, I am an hypocrite, hypocrisy hath been my burden indeed. And Lord, thou knowest, I do now walk contrary to my former self; before the Lord was pleased to work upon me, so and so I lived; but now through grace, I do walk contrary to my former self: then, soul, be of good comfort; for though there may be many failings, for which you should be humbled, yet do not say that thou art an hypocrite; thy condition is, or may be very good: wherefore go in peace and the Lord comfort thee.

Oh, but will some say, this is not my case yet; for I do not only fear that my condition is unsound, but I am afraid that I am concluded under it, and it will never be otherwise; for there are but some few elect and chosen ones that shall be

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saved to all eternity, it may be one of a hundred, or one of a thousand; and things are now cast in time according to God's decree before time. Indeed, if this were true, That Christ died for all, for all particular men, and that Christ intendeth to save every particular man, as the doctrine of some is, then I should have hope; but I have heard that this doctrine is not true, and that Christ did not die for all men, with intention to save every particular man, and therefore seeing that few are under election, one of a hundred, or two of a thousand, I fear that I am none of them; and therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for though this doctrine be true, that there is a certain number of elect persons, who are but few comparatively, and that there is no such thing as general redemption; yet this is in no way prejudicial to there is or growth of your comfort.

As for election; it is true indeed that there is a certain number of elect persons, whom God hath chosen to grace and eternal glory, before the foundation of the world was laid; for the apostle Paul saith expressly, Eph. i. 3, "That we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world;" he doth not say, blessed be God who hath decreed to choose us, but "who hath chosen us;" nor doth he say, who hath chosen all, but *us;* where some are chosen, others are left; nor doth he say, who hath chosen us upon foresight of our faith or holiness, but, "that we may be holy," holiness being the fruit of Election; and if ye look into Matt. xxv. ye shall find that those who stand at Christ's right hand at the day of judgment, unto whom he saith, "Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom," are such for whom the kingdom was prepared before the foundation of the world.*

Now this number of elect persons is certain and unalterable; for the foundation of God standeth sure. And as the schoolmen observe, If a man that is predestinated to life, could be damned, then the will of God might be altered; for when he doth predestinate a man to life, he wills his salva-

* Non qui futuri eramus sed ut essemus, nempe certum est, nempe manifestum est, ideo quippe tales eramus futuri quos elegit ipse predestinans ut per gratiam ejus tales essemus. Austin, L. Predestin. Cap. 8.

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tion; and when he damns a man, he wills his damnation; and therefore if those that are predestinated to life can be damned, then the will of God may be altered, which is impossible; for his will is like himself, unchangeable.

As the number of elect persons is certain, and cannot be diminished, nor augmented; so the Lord doth certainly know all those persons, for their names are written in the book of life, and the Lord knows who are his, that is, saith Mr. Bayne God only knows his collectively; no man or creature doth in this sense know who are God's.

But though God only knows by himself, who those are that are approved for his, yet a man may know that he is one of those elect; for if I see myself set apart from the world in time, then may I know that God hath separated me from others before time; and if I have chosen God for my portion, then may I know that God hath chosen me, for we choose him because he hath chosen us first: and if I love God in time and believe on Christ, then I may know that he hath loved me, and given himself for me: for all our grace is but a reflection of his grace. If you see the prints and characters of the seal upon the wax, you know the seal hath been set upon it, though you did not see when it was done. Of this mind was that blessed martyr, Mr. John Bradford, with whom Mr. Fox doth join, in his annotations upon Mr. Bradford's faith.* Thus do I wade, saith he, in predestination, in such sort as God hath opened; I begin with creation, from thence I come to redemption, so to justification, and so to election: we must judge of election, by that which cometh after,* that is by our faith, and belief in Christ; not that faith is the efficient cause of our election, but the effect rather, and the cause certificatory, or the cause of our certification, whereby we are brought to the knowledge of our election; and to this purpose doth the apostle exhort us to make our calling and election sure; "Give all diligence (saith he) to make your calling and election sure:" it seems then that there are some who are elected. That a man may know, and be assured of his own election. That the way to know this, is not to begin aloft, but to begin below with our vocation; and therefore the apostle puts election

* Vol. 3. p 354. Acts and Monuments.

* De Electione judicandum est a posteriori.

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last, saying, not make your election and your vocation sure; but "make your calling and your election sure."

As for universal redemption, ye must know that Christ did indeed die for all men; but it is no where said, that he died for all the particular men of the world with intention to save them, which is the thing in question: bnt that he died for all, that is, both Jew and gentile, is very true; and if ye look into Scripture, and observe how, when, and upon what occasion this speech came in, you will easily see this is the meaning of it. In the times of the Old Testament, Christ is not said to die for all, but, "he bare the sins of many," Isa. liii.; not of all, but of many. And so whilst Christ lived, preaching only to the Jews, and commanding his disciples not to go into the way of the gentiles, it is said, "He gave himself a ransom for many;" not for all, but for many: but when the apostles preached to the gentiles, then it is said indeed and not before, that Christ died for all. Why? Because they held forth Christ to the gentile as well as to the Jew. And therefore if ye look into 1 Tim. ii., you shall find, that whereas the apostle had said, verse 4, "Who would have all men to be saved;" and verse 5, 6, "For there is one Mediator, who gave himself a ransom for all:" he explains this in regard of the gentiles, verse 7, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle;" a teacher of the gentiles: and thus it is a reason why they should pray for all, even for the heathen magistrates, verse 1. And to the same purpose doth the apostle John speak, in his first epistle, ii. 2: "And he (speaking of Christ) is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but for the whole world;" not for *the sins* of the whole world, as our translation gives it, but, as the Greek and the ancient Syriac renders it, for the whole world. But why, and how is Christ the propitiation for the whole world? What, is Christ the propitiation for every particular man in the world? No, but, "the whole world," is opposed to the Jews, unto whom he wrote; for to the believing scattered Jews did he now write, as appears by the title of this epistle, called an epistle general; which title, only those epistles of James, Jude and Peter have, which were written to the scattered Jews, 1 Peter i. 1; James i. 1. So that in this sense, it is true, Christ died for all, that is, for the Jew and gentile; but

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that he died for every particular man in the world, with intention to save him, is no where to be found in the Scripture.*

As for the comfortableness of that doctrine of universal redemption; whereas it is said, that it is conducible to the comfort of such as are afflicted and troubled in spirit. If this doctrine of universal redemption be indeed an enemy to the comfort of a poor, doubting, afflicted soul, then you have no reason to be discouraged in regard of this objection, or of your own condition in this respect.

Now to clear that, take these four or five arguments:

1. That doctrine which doth enervate or make void the satisfaction of Christ for actual sins cannot be a friend, but a great enemy to the faith and comfort of a poor, doubting, and afflicted soul; for he is especially troubled for his actual sins; and the great comfort that he hath, lieth in this, that Christ hath satisfied for them. Now what saith the doctrine of universal redemption, to the satisfaction of Christ for actual sins? It plainly tells us that a man may be, and thousands are damned for those very sins which Christ hath satisfied for, and it must needs say so; for if Christ died for all the particular men in the world, then all the particular men in the world may be saved; and if they may be saved, then Christ did bear their actual sins on the cross, or else a man's sins may be pardoned, which Christ did not bear on the cross; and if Christ did bear the actual sins of all the particular men in the world, then those that are damned, must be damned for those very sins which Christ did bear and satisfy for, or else they are not damned for them. But men are not only damned for their final unbelief, but for sins against the law; for the law is made for the ungodly. And Rom. ii. 12: "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law." "And because of these things" (saith the apostle, speaking of actual sins against the law)

* Trem. et Bodet non pro nostris tantum sed etiam pro totius mundi; nequaquam hanc interpretationem fert phrasis; verito ergo et non pro nobis tantum sed etiam pro toto mundo sic et Arabs, &c. porro usitatum est Hebræis totum mundum dicere pro certa universitate quorundum de quibus in subjecta materia agitur &c. Ludov. de Dieu. in Joan. i. 2.

Johannes qui natione Judæus erat ne existimaretur docuisse pro Judæis tantum Christum propitiationem esse quando dixit est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris, adjecit pro totius etiam mundi peccatis ut etiam Gentes significares.—Cyril. L. 11. cap. 19.

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"the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." Now if men be damned for their actual sins against the law, and Christ have borne them on the cross and satisfied for them, then men are damned for those very sins which Christ hath satisfied for; and if so, then what is this but to enervate, and make void the satisfaction of Christ? If you pay a debt, and afterwards be thrown into prison for the same debt, doth not the imprisonment make void the satisfaction of your payment. Yet thus now it is according to the principles of this doctrine of universal redemption: surely therefore that doctrine is no friend, but a great enemy to the faith and comfort of a poor, doubting and afflicted soul.

2. The intercession of Christ, in conjunction with the death of Christ, is a great pillar of our christian consolation, Rom. viii. 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Verse 34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us: who shall separate us from the love of God? &c." So that our comfort is not only laid on the death of Christ, nor on the intercession of Christ alone, but upon the connection of these two together. And indeed, what comfort would the Jews have in the bare sacrifice, if the high priest did not take the blood thereof and carry it into the holy place, sprinkling the mercy-seat for them, whom the sacrifice was offered for? But according to this doctrine of universal redemption, the intercession of Christ is parted from his death; for though it tells you that Christ died for all, yet it tells you, that he doth not intercede for all; and it must needs say so, for Christ said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me always;" therefore if Christ should pray for the conversion of all the particular men in the world, then all the particular men in the world should be converted and so saved; but all are not saved or converted, therefore this doctrine must needs divide between the intercession and the death of Christ, and so pull down that great pillar of our christian comfort, which stands in the conjunction of Christ's death and intercession.

3. That doctrine which is contrary or repugnant to the free grace of God, cannot be a true friend to the comfort of a poor, doubting soul; for what is our great comfort on this

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side heaven, but the free grace of God? Now, what is free grace, but the special favour of God shewn to some more than to others? And therefore if you look into Rom. ix. ye shall find, that when the apostle would set out the free grace of God, saying, "Whom he will, he shews mercy to; and whom he will, he hardens;" he first shews that Jacob and Esau were alike, alike in regard of their parentage, for both were of Isaac and Rebecca; alike in regard of their work, "For the children being not yet born, and having done neither good or evil, &c.," yet God did love the one and hate the other, shewing mercy to the one and not to the other. Why? Because "God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." ver. 15. So that it is the work of free grace to shew mercy to some and not to others, who are alike unworthy. So again, Ephes. ii., the apostle proving that by grace we are saved; first he shews that the Ephesians by nature were as unworthy as any other, being all by nature the children of wrath, ver. 1, 2, yet those Ephesians did obtain mercy and not others. Why? Because by grace they were saved. So that free grace is that distinguishing mercy of God, whereby he doth shew mercy to some and not to others, who are alike miserable and unworthy. But now this doctrine of universal redemption tells us, that as Christ died for all, so he doth give a sufficiency of grace unto all, and therefore that which distinguisheth one man from another, must be the free will of man and not the free grace of God; for *commune quæ tenus, commune non distinguit;* that which is common, as common, cannot distinguish. As suppose now that a father doth bestow an equal sum of money upon two children, to purchase house or land with; one doth purchase and the other not; the reason why the one purchases and the other not, is, because the one wills it and the other not. Indeed he that purchaseth doth it by his father's help, assistance and money; but what reason is there why he doth make a purchase and the other not, but because he wills it and the other not? So, if God give a sufficiency of grace unto all; that one man doth believe, you will say, is by the grace of God; but the reason why one believes and the other not, is only the will of man, that this man wills it and the other not. Now where free-will hath the casting vote,

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there the free grace of God doth not reign. But according to the doctrine of universal redemption, free-will is that which doth make the difference between man and man, it is that which hath the casting voice; surely therefore, it is no friend, but a real enemy to the free grace of God, and so an enemy to the comfort of a poor, doubting soul.

4. That doctrine which is opposite to the assurance of my salvation, cannot be a friend to my comfort in time of temptation. For what comfort can I have in my soul, so long as I doubt of my eternal welfare? Now this doctrine of universal redemption, doth destroy the assurance of our salvation; for who doth not know that according to that doctrine, a man may fall from grace as long as he lives? Else (it will tell you) that he should not act freely, but be under a necessity, and necessity and freedom cannot stand together. But if a man may fall from grace as long as he lives, then he can have no assurance of his salvation till he be dead. And if a godly man cannot have assurance of his perseverance in grace, then he cannot have assurance of his salvation. But according to that doctrine a godly man cannot have assurance of his perseverance in grace; for I can have no assurance of any mercy without God's promise. But this doctrine will tell you that God hath nowhere promised to any man, that he shall certainly persevere in grace. Surely therefore it is no friend to our assurance of salvation, and therefore is a real enemy to the faith and comfort of a poor, doubting soul.

5. The more any doctrine doth hang the mercy of God upon conditions to be performed by us, the less comfortable it is and the more it leaves a poor doubting soul in his fears. Now according to this doctrine of universal redemption, the whole mercy of God is made to depend and hang upon performance of our conditions, yea, upon the performance of the condition of nature. For, say we, if Christ died for all particular men, and so God doth will the salvation of all the particular men in the world, then he doth will this, either absolutely or conditionally; if absolutely, then it must needs come to pass; conditionally therefore, saith this doctrine, God doth will the salvation of all men, upon condition that they repent, believe, and obey; if so, say we, then either God doth will this condition, viz. that all particular men

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should repent and believe or not; if not, then God doth not will the salvation of all; for he that doth not will the means, doth not will the end; *Qui vult finem, vult media ad finem.* If God do will this condition, viz. the faith and repentance of all the men in the world; then, say we, he doth will this either absolutely or conditionally; if absolutely, then it must needs come to pass that all men should repent and believe, which they do not. Conditionally therefore, say the maintainers of this doctrine, and what condition is their precedent to faith and repentance, but nature and the work thereof? Yea, what grace or mercy is there in the gospel, but they do tie it up unto our conditions? Will ye instance in the purchase and benefits of the death of Christ? These, say they, are to be given out upon condition. Will ye instance in the grace of the new covenant? All that, say they, is to be given out and is promised upon condition. There is no absolute promise of grace, say they, in all the scripture. Now look what that doctrine is which doth make all grace conditional, that must needs be very obstructive to the hope and comfort of a poor, doubting soul. Such is this doctrine of universal redemption; surely therefore it can be no true friend, but is a real enemy to the consolation of a poor, doubting and afflicted soul.

But if Christ did not die for all and every particular man, how can I conclude that he did die for me; can I raise a conclusion of faith unless the proposition be universal?

Although I need not answer this objection because those that make it do themselves answer it, from their own principles and experience, saying, that faith is an assent to the truth of the gospel; and that they were converted unto God and did believe before they held this doctrine of universal redemption. Yet for further answer you must know,

There is a faith of reliance, and there is a faith of assurance. As the faith of assurance hath a *shall be* of mercy for its bottom; so a *may be* of mercy is a sufficient ground and bottom for the faith of reliance. Jonathan and his armour-bearer had but a *may be* of mercy, when they went against their enemies; "It may be the Lord will work for us," 1 Sam. xiv. 6: yet they relied on God. Now, though Christ did not die for all particular men, yet if he died for sinners indefinitely, there is a *may be* of mercy for me. But so it is,

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that Christ did die for sinners indefinitely, though not for sinners universally; and therefore there is a sufficient ground for me to believe, and rely on him.

Ye know, or may know, that the act of reliance, is before the act of assurance. I must indeed be assured that Christ is able to save me, before I rely on him, but I must first rely on him, before I can be assured that he will save me; and by this act of reliance, we grow up into assurance; I know that he will shew mercy to me, by my coming to him, and relying on him; for he hath said, "Whoever comes unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Now if my assurance be raised from the act of reliance, then the first ground and bottom of the conclusion of my faith, is not this general proposition; Christ died for all; but this indefinite proposition, Christ died for sinners. And if the conclusion of faith must arise from a general proposition, then take it thus; Whoever comes to Christ, and relieth on him, shall be saved: or thus; Christ died for all those that do come to him, and rely on him. But I come to him, and rely on him, therefore Christ died for me, and I shall be saved by him. So that thus now, ye see the want of that general proposition, Christ died for all men, is no hindrance to the conclusion, or assurance of our faith; and therefore you have no reason to be discouraged in reference to this objection.

Yet there is one thing more that sticks with me, even that old objection which I cannot be rid of: when I look into my condition, the condition of my soul or body, I find my condition is such as never any one's condition was; I have conversed with many a godly man and woman, but I do not find that ever he or she was in such a condition as I am; and I have read the Scripture, but I do not find there that ever any godly man was in such a condition as I am: could I be but persuaded that ever any gracious man was in the like condition, I should have hope and comfort; but I am persuaded that never any godly soul was in such a condition as I am; therefore I am thus discouraged, have I not cause and reason now?

No: for if it be usual with the saints and people of God to think thus, then you have no reason to be discouraged in this respect. Now I pray look what the church saith in Lam. i. 1, 2: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold,

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and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;" if there be any condition like unto my condition: and it seems that such were the thoughts of God's people whom Peter did write unto in his first epistle, iv. 12: "Beloved (saith he) think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:" you will think that no body's condition is like unto your's, some strange thing is happened unto you. And so in 1 Peter v. 9, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world:" you think that you meet with such afflictions as never were in the world before; be not deceived, saith he.

But suppose that your condition be as never any body's was, hath not the Lord said, "Behold I work a new thing?" Is not the name of Christ, "Wonderful," and are wonders wrought ordinarily? If your condition be as never any body's condition was, then have you an opportunity of glorifying God more than ever any man or woman had; then you have an opportunity of glorifying God, either in doing or in suffering, more than ever any man or woman had. And then, oh, what grace is here, what mercy is here, what love is here to overcome thy soul withal, that thou shouldest have such an opportunity as never man or woman had before! And therefore, what I said unto you often, I must now conclude with: God's people have no reason for their discouragements whatever their condition be.

Thus now I have done with this last instance, and with all the instances. Give me leave to speak something by way of application, in reference to the whole, and so I will shut up this exercise.

If all these things be so, if this be true, that the children of God have no reason for their discouragements, whatever their condition be: then what a mighty necessity is there upon us all, to look into our conditions, and to consider whether we be in Christ or no; whether we be godly, yea, or nay; whether we have made our peace with God, aye, or not: and whether we have faith, aye, or no? All men have not faith, saith the apostle. Indeed all men say they have faith; and should I go from seat to seat, and from bosom to bosom, and knock at every breast in the congregation, asking, whether doth faith dwell here or no? unless it were some

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few troubled ones, afflicted in conscience, every one of you would say, I do believe, I praise God I do believe, I have faith here within: but all men have not faith, and few there be that do believe. Children, young men and women, faith is not a thing that is born with you; it is a harder thing to believe than to keep the ten commandments. When once you come to know what it is to believe, you will say, Oh, it is a harder thing to believe than to do any thing; I do not know any thing in all the world that is so hard as to believe. But if you do believe, be in Christ, are godly, and have made your peace with God, blessed are you of the Lord, nothing shall offend you, nothing shall discourage you. But if not godly, if not in Christ, if not believing, every thing shall offend thee and discourage thee, and thou hast no reason to be encouraged, whatever thy condition be. Shall we not then, my beloved, all of us, as in the presence of the Lord, seriously look into our condition and consider whether we be in Christ, aye, or not?

But suppose I be in Christ, or I be not in Christ; believe, or not believe; what then? If yet you do not believe, if yet you be not in Christ, if yet you be not godly; this doctrine doth here from the Lord hold forth an invitation to you to come unto Jesus Christ: for if a man be in Christ, and be godly, then he hath no reason to be discouraged, whatever his condition be. If a man be not godly, he hath no reason to be encouraged, whatever his condition be. On the one hand there lies all encouragements, on the other hand there lies all discouragements. Now, therefore, in the name of the Lord, do I here, this morning, lay before this congregation life and death; encouragement on the one hand, and discouragement on the other hand: and if there be an adulterer, a swearer, a lying child, or a stealing servant; if there be ever a poor wanton, a sabbath breaker, an opposer of God here; I beseech you, in the Lord, come unto Jesus Christ; by all these encouragements that I have been speaking of, by all the mercies of the new covenant, and by the salvation of thine own soul, man, or woman, I beseech you come unto Jesus Christ. Oh, that men and women would give no rest unto themselves, till they have made their peace with God, and till they have gotten into Jesus Christ.

And in case that you be in Christ, and that you do believe,

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that you be godly, and have made your peace with God; then see that ye walk up unto all these encouragements, see that you walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. Oh, you that are godly, (if these things be as ye have heard,) why hang you down your heads; why are you cast down and disquieted; why do you not walk in the comforts of this truth declared, and in the strength of these encouragements? You see what a venture we have run to speak comfort to you that want comfort. You have heard in several exercises, that a godly man hath no reason for his discouragements, whatever his condition be: not in regard of sin; not in regard of failings and successlessness in duties; not in regard of want of assurance; not in regard of temptation; not in regard of affliction; not in regard of desertion; and now, not in regard of his condition, in itself considered. Now, after all this, I appeal to you, you that are without comfort, do you not think that there are some wicked men in this congregation, that have presumed, when they have heard these things preached, and have said, These things belong to me; and so have endangered their own souls by presumption, comforting themselves when they should not be comforted? I appeal to you, whether you do not think that there are some wicked men in the congregation, that have thus endangered their souls by misapplication of these consolations: and if so, that there hath been this hazard run, and all to comfort you; then will you now refuse this comfort? Oh, you that have refused comfort all this while, receive it in the Lord; and you that were never comforted before, now comfort yourselves, and walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. And you that have gone up and down fearing, trembling, doubting, and much discouraged; yet now at the last say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, wait on God, trust in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." How you should so hope, and wait, and trust in God, as to bear up your hearts against all discouragements, I shall yet speak to in the next exercise.

So much for the ninth and last instance.

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SERMON XIII.

THE CURE OF DISCOURAGEMENTS BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God;" or, wait thou, or, trust thou in God.—Psalm xlii. 11.

You have heard of the saints' discouragements, and the unreasonableness of them; there is no just cause or reason for their discouragements. Would you now hear of some means against them? The Psalmist saith in these words, "Hope thou in God," or trust thou in God, or wait thou on God. And so the doctrine plainly is this:

Faith is the help against all discouragements.

Hoping, trusting, waiting on God, is the special, if not the only means appointed against all discouragements. "I had verily fainted, unless I had believed, (saith David,) to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." I had fainted, unless I had believed. Faith bears up the heart against all discouragements.

For your more clear understanding of this truth, and our better proceeding, I shall labour,

First, To shew you what it is to hope, trust in God, or to wait on him.

Secondly, That faith doth quiet one's heart in the times of discouragements.

Thirdly, That it is the duty of all the saints and people of God, when discouragements do arise, then, and then especially to trust in God and to exercise their faith.

Fourthly, What there is in faith that can bear up the heart against all discouragements, and how faith doth it.

First, if ye ask, What it is to hope in God, to trust in God, and to wait on him?

I answer, that to hope in God, is to expect help from God; to trust in God, is to rely or rest upon God for help; and to wait on him, is to continue and abide in this expectation or reliance. Properly, according to scripture phrase, trusting in God is the recumbency or the reliance of the soul upon God in Christ, for some good thing that lies out

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of sight. I say, first, it is the recumbency or reliance of the soul upon God, the staying of the soul upon God: so you read in Isaiah xxvi. 3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." So the spouse in the Canticles, is found leaning upon her Beloved; and so we are commanded to trust: not εν τω Χριστω only, but επι τον εγειραντα ιησουν, on him that raiseth Christ from the dead: which notes a fiducial repose; so that trusting in God, is to stay upon him. Rom. iv. 11. And then I say, it is the reliance or the stayance of the soul upon God in Christ; and so I take it to be meant here, for the word here translated, God, hope or trust in God, is in the plural number, *Elohim;* and so when the prophet, in Isa. xxvi., doth exhort unto trusting in the Lord, he gives this reason, at verse 4, "For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" so you read it, but according to the Hebrew thus: "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in Jehovah Jah is everlasting strength." "For in Jehovah Jah:" Jah is an abridgment or an abreviation of Jehovah, noting the Son of God; and so when Jesus Christ comes in the end of the world, to sit upon his glorious throne, the converting Jew shall praise him under that name, singing, as you read in Revelation xix., "Hallelujah," praise the Jah: which if you compare with Psalm lxviii., you shall find is to be understood of Christ, at verse 4: "Sing unto God, sing praises to his name; extol him that rides upon the heavens, by his name Jah; rejoice before him, extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah;" and they shall sing, Hallelujah. Now if you look into Psalm lxviii. 18, you shall find the reason why this Jah is to be praised: for, saith the Psalm, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men." Which words, Eph. iv., are applied to Christ: "But unto every one of us, is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Verse 8, "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." So that when the prophet doth exhort us to trust in Jehovah Jah, he exhorteth us to trust in the Lord, in Christ; and therefore I say, both according to the Old and New Testament, faith is the repose or recumbency of the soul upon God in Christ.

But yet that is not all. A man that doth repose upon

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God in Christ, trusting in him, doth trust unto him for some good thing that lies out of sight; and therefore the apostle saith, that "faith is the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi.; where he gives divers instances of Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and others, who all did repose upon God for somewhat that lay out of view; and this indeed is only worthy of the name of faith. I will trust a man that is most unworthy, I will trust a thief, I will trust a liar, so far as I can see him. But as Parisiensis saith well, this is *fides Deo digna*, faith worthy of God, to repose on God for somewhat that lies out of sight, and out of view; and when a man doth thus stay himself upon God in Christ, for somewhat that lies out of sight, then he is said to trust in God; and when a man doth continue thus, then he is said for to wait on God. This is the first. But then,

Secondly, How may it appear that faith, and the exercise thereof, will quiet the soul, suppress or allay discouragements?

You know how it was with Hannah, when she had received a word from God, "She went away (saith the text) and looked no more sorrowful," her heart was quieted; why? she had a word from God; and though before she was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, yet having received a word from God, and believing that word, her heart was quiet. Prov. xvi. 3: "Commit thy works unto the Lord," there is faith; "and thy thoughts shall be established," there is quietude. And if you look again into Isa. xxvi. you shall find that the Scripture is most express for this, verse 3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Mark the words. First, the Lord doth here engage himself to give peace unto those that do stay upon him, that have this faith of reliance, though they have not yet attained to the faith of assurance, to be able to say, I know my sin is pardoned, and that Christ is mine, yet, if they can but stay themselves upon God, the Lord doth hereby engage himself to give peace unto them; yea, he doth not only engage himself to give peace unto such a soul as stays himself upon God, but double peace: you read it in your English, perfect peace; thou wilt keep him in perfect peace: but in the Hebrew it is, peace, peace; thou wilt keep him in double peace, he shall have

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peace, and peace; not peace and doubting; not peace, and no peace: but if he stay himself upon the Lord, he shall have peace, peace; he shall have double peace. Yea, the Lord doth not only engage to give peace unto such a soul, but to keep him in peace; "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," or in peace, peace; and all upon this account, because he trusteth in thee; not because he prayed, not because he humbled himself, (though that is his duty; and he doth thereby *placere Deo*, though not *placare Deum*) but because he trusteth in thee, because he stayeth himself upon thee. And ye know, that if ye have a business depending at law, though for the present you be much troubled about it; yet, if you have a friend, a lawyer, that is able, faithful and willing to look to it; if you can but leave your business with him, it doth very much quiet your heart; the very leaving your business with him, doth quiet your mind. So here. If a man can but leave his business, and his cause, and his things with God; then he is at rest, and he may say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," as David did; which is done by faith. And to clear this a little, three or four things there are that do ordinarily cause disquietude or discouragement. First, the darkness that is in the understanding; for when a man is in the dark, especially if he be alone, he is very apt to be scared, and to be disquieted. Secondly, inordinate and unruly affections, and passions, especially that of fear, whereby the soul is benighted. Thirdly, guilt of conscience. Though there be much water that doth beat upon the ship at sea, yet it sinketh not; but when there is a leak, a hole in the ship, then the ship sinketh, and the water doth become its grave. So, though there be many troubles that beat upon a man, yet his heart doth not sink; but when there is a leak in his conscience, when there is a hole there, when a man hath a guilty conscience, then he sinketh, and his heart fails him. And fourthly, the apprehension of God's greatness, with our distance from him. Now faith cures all this; for in opposition to the first, of darkness, faith brings light into the soul, and shews a man his way, and his warrant for what he doth. Secondly, it doth pare and take off those inordinate and unruly affections and passions that are in the soul; and therefore in Psalm xxxvii., at verses 1 and 7, you shall find that fretting and trusting are set in opposition. "Fret not

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thyself because of the evil doer, verse 3, but trust in the Lord." And again verse 7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way." Thirdly, it doth heal the conscience, and purify that; therefore saith the apostle, "Let us draw near with assurance of faith, having our consciences sprinkled," &c Heb. x. Fourthly, it does also bring the soul near to God; the great work of faith is to bring God and the soul together. So you have it in Eph. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him." Faith gives a man access unto God, and brings him near unto God. But a man may come near unto God, and yet he may fear, and tremble, as the Jews did at Mount Sinai; true, but saith the apostle, "By this faith we have boldness and access." The word is, παρρησια, a freedom of speech; a man by faith may come into the presence of God with open mouth and speak all his mind unto God. Yea, faith doth not only thus bring a man into the presence of God with open mouth, freedom of speech and boldness; but it brings him into the presence of God with open face and uncovered. "We all with open face," saith the apostle, speaking to believers in the times of the gospel; "We all with open face behold, as in a glass, the mirror of the Lord;" with open and uncovered face. There are three vails, or coverings that we read of in the Old Testament, that were thrown upon faces. 1. There is the vail of obscurity, and that was upon the face of Moses. 2. The vail and the covering of guilt, and so Haman's face was covered, a cloth thrown over his face, and his face was covered. 3. And there is the vail of abashment, or shame; and so it is said of the angels, that they cover their faces in the presence of God. Now to shew with what boldness a christian, and a believer, comes into the presence of God by Christ through faith, as if all vails were taken off; saith the apostle, "We come with open face;" and "we all with open face behold, as in a glass, the mirror of the Lord." And upon this account, a believer may now come with more boldness into the presence of God, than Adam in the state of innocency; for though Adam in the state of innocency had no vail, or covering of guilt thrown over his face, yet there was a great distance between God and him. But now, since the fall, since

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Christ's time, God is come into our nature, manifested in the flesh; and so God is come near to us, and by faith we do draw near to God. No wonder, therefore, that the apostle saith, that "by faith we have boldness, and access with confidence." Faith tells a man, that God is come near to him, and he is come near to God; and therefore faith certainly is the great remedy and means against all discouragements that can arise.

Thirdly, How may it appear, that when discouragements do arise, it is the duty of every christian to exercise faith, and then especially?

You know what David said, "At what time I am afraid, I trust in thee." And the Scripture is most express for this: Isa. l. 10, "Who is amongst you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." First, It is possible for one that is the servant of God to be in darkness, and in such a dark condition, where no light nor no comfort is. Secondly, When he is in this dark condition, and discouragements do arise, (the commandment is most express,) then he is to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. So also our Saviour Christ commands his disciples, John xiv. 1, "Let not your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me." There was a great cloud arising upon Christ's disciples, Christ to be taken from them by death; the Shepherd to be stricken, and the sheep scattered. Now the only means against trouble that Christ prescribes, is this: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;" and he gives many arguments to press thereunto, in this xivth chapter. This time was the time of Christ's own trouble; Christ was now to die, and to bear the sin of many, and to lie under the sense of his Father's wrath and displeasure; whereupon he saith, that his heart was heavy unto death: but though it was the time of his own trouble, yet he addresseth himself to comfort his disciples against their trouble, and the only means and remedy that he doth prescribe is this, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." So that I say, when discouragements do arise, it is the duty of all Christ's disciples then, and then especially, for to trust in God by Christ; for I pray, what is faith made for, but for such a time as this is? every grace is

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to be exercised in its season. If a man have sinned, then he is to repent; that is the season for his repentance. If a man have received any mercy from God, then he is to be thankful; that is the season of thankfulness. If another poor christian be in want, then he is to exercisé his charity; that is the season of that grace of charity. If God's face do shine upon a man, then he is to rejoice; that is the season of spiritual joy. If a man be given to wantonness, and have a beautiful object laid before him, then he is to exercise chastity; and that is a season for it. So, when discouragements do arise, then he is to exercise faith; and that is the season, the proper time and season for it. For it is not only our duty to bring forth fruit, but we must bring forth fruit in its season. Psalm i. 2. Now this is the proper season for faith to work in, when all a man's comforts are out of sight; and therefore when discouragements do arise, then, and then especially, the saints and the people of God are to exercise their faith.

Fourthly, But what power hath faith to suppress and allay discouragements; and what is there in faith that can bear up a man's heart against all discouragements, and how doth faith do it?

Faith doth give a man the true prospect of things, past, present and to come, and of things as they are. Whence are all our fears and discouragements, but from hence, that men do not see things as they are: if evil be stirring, they think it is greater than it is; if good be stirring, they think it is lesser than it is. If a man be in temptation, then he loseth sight of his former experiences, and so he is much discouraged. If a man be under a desertion, he loseth the sight of what is present, what God is to him, and what he is to God; and so he is discouraged. If a man be under an affliction, he loseth the sight of what is to come; the end, and the issue of the affliction, and so he is disquieted. But now when faith comes, it opens a man's eyes to see things that are invisible; it is the evidence of things not seen: "By faith, Moses saw him that was invisible." And therefore when the apostle Peter doth direct his people for to see things past, present and to come, he exhorts them to a work of faith, Epist. 1. 9. "He that lacks these things, is blind;" one of those things is faith, as you read in verse 5, "Give all diligence, add to your faith," &c., then, "He that lacketh

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these things is blind," at verse 9. But suppose a man do want faith; wherein is he blind? Why, saith the apostle, "He cannot see things afar off," he cannot see into the other world, he cannot see unto the end of a temptation, or affliction, or to the end of a desertion. Well, but though he cannot see things that are to come, yet he may see things that are past: nay, saith he, if a man wants the assurance of God's love, and that is an act of faith, "he hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins: Wherefore the rather (saith he at verse 10) brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." If you would see things past, present and to come, then grow in faith, and assurance of God's love, and so, saith he, shall you be able to see things afar off. Could a man but see what would be the end, and issue of his affliction, he would be quiet under it. It is in regard of our affliction, as it is in regard of your salt, or sea water: take the water as it is in the sea, and so it is salt and brackish; but drawn up by the sun into the clouds, it becomes sweet, and falls down into sweet rain. So take an affliction in itself, and it is salt and brackish; but drawn up by divine love, then it is sweet; and if a soul can but taste the love of God in it, and see what a loving end the Lord will make; he will then find it is very sweet, and say, I could not have been without this affliction; I do not know how any one twig of this rod could have been spared. Now, it is only faith that shews a man the end and the issue of all his troubles. It stands upon the high tower of the threatening and promise, seeing over all mountains and difficulties; it seeth into the other world; it sees through death and beyond death; it sees through affliction and beyond affliction; it seeth through temptation and beyond temptation; it seeth through desertion and beyond desertion; it seeth through God's anger and beyond his anger: I say, it seeth things past, present and to come. Now, if a man had such a power as he were able to fetch in all his former experiences, to see things present as they are, and to see all the events, and issues of things to come, would he not be quiet notwithstanding all that might arise for the present? Thus faith is able to shew a man things past, present and to come; and to shew him greater matter of comfort, than the matter of his troubles is; and in so doing it must needs quiet the soul.

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Faith, true saving faith, doth see that in God and in Christ, which answers unto all our fears, wants and miseries; for faith closeth with the name of God; "Let him stay himself upon the name of God," Isa. l. Now there is that in God's name that doth answer unto all our fears and wants. For example, Exod. xxxiv., the Lord descended in the clouds at verse 5, and stood with Moses there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord, ver. 6. the Lord, the Lord: Jehovah, Jehovah: that is, one that gives a being unto things that are not. Will you say, Oh, that it were thus, or thus with me? but as Rachel mourned for her children and could not be comforted, because they were not: so do I mourn after my prayers, because they are not; and after duties because they are not; and after humiliations, because they are not. Well, saith the Lord, be of good comfort, for my name is Jehovah, who do give a being to things that are not; and this he repeateth, the Lord, the Lord; or Jehovah, Jehovah. Well, but though the Lord do give a being to things that are not, this doth not comfort me; for though, I praise the Lord, I can say, my prayers are, and my duties are; yet the Lord knows they are very weak, and my temptations are very strong, and my lusts mighty and therefore I am thus discouraged. Yet, be of good comfort; for, saith the Lord, my name is EL; that is, the strong, or the mighty God; and therefore though thou beest never so weak, and thy duties weak, yet I will carry on the work of my grace in thee; and though thy temptations be never so strong, and thy lusts strong, yet I am stronger, for my name is EL, the mighty God. Oh, but though God be strong, and able to help me; yet I fear that God is not willing to help me; I know God is able, and that God is strong enough, but I fear the Lord is not willing, and therefore I am thus discouraged: yet, be of good comfort, saith the Lord, for my name is *Merciful*, that is the next word; the Lord, the Lord; the Mighty God: and as my name is the Mighty God, and therefore I am able to help thee; so my name is Merciful, and therefore I am willing to help thee. But though the Lord be willing to help me, yet I am a poor unworthy creature, and have nothing at all to move God to help me; yet be of good comfort; for saith the Lord then, my name is Gracious; I do not shew mercy because you are good, but because I am good; nor do I stand upon your desert, but

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I shew mercy out of free love; my name is Gracious. Oh, but I have been sinning, I have been sinning a long time, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years: had I come in at first, I might have had mercy; but I have been sinning long, and therefore I fear there is no mercy for me. Yet, saith the Lord, be of good comfort for my name is Long-suffering, that is the next, Gracious and Long-suffering; slow to anger, or long-suffering. Oh, but I have sinned exceedingly, I have sinned abundantly; so many sins as I am never able to reckon up, and to humble myself for; I have broken all my promises with God, and all the vows that I have made unto him; and therefore I am thus discouraged. Yet saith he, be of good comfort, for "I am abundant in goodness and truth:" art thou abundant in sin? I am abundant in goodness: and hast thou broken faith with me? yet I am abundant in goodness and in truth also. Oh, but though the Lord be thus unto his own chosen ones, such as David, Abraham, or Moses, yet I fear the Lord will not be so to me. Yes, saith the Lord at verse 7., "Keeping mercy for thousands:" I have not spent all my mercy upon David or upon Abraham, or upon Paul, or upon Peter; but I keep mercy for thousands. Oh, but yet my sins do recoil, I am the greatest sinner in the world, for I have sinned all kinds of sin, I have sinned all sorts of sins, and therefore I fear there is no hope for me. Yet, saith the Lord, be not discouraged, for I keep mercy for thousands, "forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin;" even all sorts and all kinds of sins; the sin of nature and the sin of life; the sin of weakness and the sin of presumption; the sin of ignorance and the sin against knowledge: these, saith the Lord, I forgive, even all sorts and all kinds of sins, and this is my name for ever. Oh, but I am afraid to lay hold upon this promise, for I think this is a doctrine of liberty. Say not so, saith the Lord, at the next verse, "I will by no means clear the guilty:" but if there be ever a poor, drooping, fearing, trembling soul, that desires to know my name, lo, saith the Lord, here is my name, whereby I will be known for ever: "The Lord, Jehovah, that gives a being to things that are not; the mighty God; the merciful God: the gracious God; abundant in goodness and in truth; reserving mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; and this is my name for ever." Now

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faith comes, and closeth with this name of God, leading the soul into this rich wardrobe, and so doth quiet the heart against all discouragements.

Faith doth put the soul under God's commandment, and leaveth God to answer unto all such objections and inconveniences as may come thereby; which if a man can do he may be very quiet. Now true saving faith will enable him to do this. For ye know how it was with the three children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; they put themselves under God's commandment. The Lord commanded and said, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image." Well, but the king commands them to fall down before his image. No, say they, we will not stir, we will not bow. But, saith the king, I will make you bow or I will heat the furnace seven times hotter for you. Well, be it so, say they; as for that we are not solicitous, we will do the work that God hath set us to do; we will put ourselves under God's command; we know that our God is able to deliver us; and whether he will deliver us or no, we will leave that to him, let him answer to the inconveniences and mischiefs that follow upon his work; for saith the text: "They trusted in the Lord." And so you know it was with Noah; Noah was commanded to build an ark, for, saith the Lord, yet an hundred and twenty years and the whole world shall be destroyed, and therefore Noah, "build thou an ark for thyself and thy family;" which Noah did and put himself under this command. But now the world, the old world might speak thus (as certainly the language of their conversation was): Noah, dost thou think that thou art the only man in all the world that God loves? Dost thou think, Noah, that God loves thee, one man, more than all the men in the world; and thy one family, more than all the families in the world beside? And if thou dost believe what thou preachest, that the world shall be destroyed by water in an hundred and twenty years, why dost thou marry and beget children, as thou hast done since thou hast preached this doctrine? And Noah, if thou dost make an ark or a ship, who shall be the pilot; who shall be the mariner, the sailor? As for thyself, thou hast been a preacher, and dost thou think that thou and thy few sons are able to guide and govern so great a vessel? If it be as thou preachest, that the beasts, the wild beasts of the field shall

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come unto this ark; the lion, and the bear, and the tiger, will they not tear thee to pieces? And if all the beasts of the field, two by two, shall come into the ark, Noah, will there not be such a stench in the ark with their dung as will poison thee; shalt thou be ever able to live, thinkest thou? Well, for all this Noah goes on, and he built the ark and leaves God that set him on work to answer to all these objections, and to all those inconveniences that might come by the doing the thing which God commands. And so doth faith always; faith puts a man under the commandment of God, and leaves God to answer to those objections and inconveniences that may come thereby. Now when a man can do thus, must he not needs be quiet?

It is (to speak more briefly) the proper work of faith to resign and give up our wills unto God; for by the resignation of the will unto God, we do trust God with ourselves and conditions.

It is the proper work of faith to fall with a suitable promise and to apply the same. If that plaister of the promise be not laid on the soul with a warm hand it will not stick. And what is the reason that the promise sticks not upon many souls, but because it is laid on with the cold and chill hand of unbelief. Now the hand of faith is a warm hand.

It is the proper work of faith to trade with the call of God; for true saving faith is a venturing grace, but without a call it will not venture.

It is the proper work of faith to see the hand of God in every dispensation; "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," saith faith. "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, for thou Lord hast done it," saith faith.

It is the proper work of faith to look on both sides of God's dispensation and of our own condition. There is a dark side of a dispensation and there is a light side thereof. Sense and reason look on the dark side alone, faith seeth both sides. Come, my beloved brethren (said Latimer to his fellow prisoners when he went to the stake), though we pass through the fire to-day, yet we shall light such a candle in England, as shall never be put out again. He saw both sides of the dispensation, why? but because he believed.

It is the proper work of faith to see one contrary in another; for it speaks and concludes as the word of faith

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doth. Now the word of faith speaketh on this wise: "I will give you a door of hope in the valley Achor. And the Lord shall judge his people, and repent towards his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and none shut up or left." Deut. xxxii. 36.

It is the proper work of faith to engage God to succour, Psalm xxxvii. 40: "For the Lord will save them, because they trust in him." So Isa. xxvi. 3: "Thou wilt keep them in perfect peace, because they trust in thee." Now when a man can do all these things, will he not be quiet and free from discouragements? Surely he will. Faith can and will do these and all these things. Certainly therefore, faith and faith alone is that grace which will bear up the heart against all discouragements.

Now if faith be such a help against all discouragements, then in case that discouragements do arise, you see what to do: exercise your faith; trust in the Lord, trust in the Lord for ever; for in Jehovah Jah is everlasting strength; he is the Rock of Ages, trust in him. Oh, ye people of the Lord, trust in the Lord for ever, pour out your hearts before him; wait, hope, trust in the Lord.

But will every faith quiet a man's heart against discouragements; suppress and allay our discouragements?

No. There is a feigned and there is an unfeigned faith. There is an effectual and there is an ineffectual faith. There is an operative, working faith and there is a workless faith. Saith the apostle: "Thou sayest thou hast faith, shew me thy faith by thy works." The more precious a thing is, the more counterfeits there are of it. And what is more precious than faith? Therefore there is a counterfeit faith, and a counterfeit faith will not quiet one's heart, suppress and allay one's fears. Yea, true saving faith will not do it neither in the habit; it is only that faith can do it which God rewardeth. God doth not reward the habit of grace, but the act of grace; he rewardeth men according to their works and not according to their habits. Yea, strong and grown faith will not do it always. A man may have assurance of God's love and yet he may be discouraged. You say indeed, if I had but the assurance of God's love in Christ, and did know that God were mine, and that I had an interest in Jesus Christ, I would never be discouraged. But be not deceived. When

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David spake the words of the text he had assurance, for he saith: "I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God," and yet he was discouraged; for he saith: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me?" So then it is not every faith, nor always true faith, nor always grown faith can do it.

But how then should a man so exercise his faith as he may bear up his heart against all discouragements, in case that discouragements do arise?

You must be humbled for your unbelief. A man can never believe as he should that is not humbled for his unbelief; and he is not far from faith and the workings thereof, that is humbled for unbelief and the workings thereof. You shall see therefore in Lam. iii., that as soon as the church had reproved herself for her unbelief, how presently she gathereth hope; saith she at verse 17: "Thou hast removed my soul far from peace, I forgot prosperity, and I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." Now she humbles herself for it: "Remembering mine affliction and my misery; the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me: this I recal to mind, therefore have I hope."—I humbled myself for my former unbelief and despairing thoughts and words; and therefore have I hope. Some think they do well to doubt. Oh, says one, if I should not thus fear and doubt I should grow secure. But a man may be *tutus* though he be not *securus*. Safety speaks opposition to danger, security to watchfulness; yea, there is a holy security which we are to labour after, and the more we are freed from these doubting fears, the more we attain unto that security. Would you therefore, so exercise your faith as that you may not labour under sad discouragements? Take heed that you do not please yourself in your doubting, but be humbled for your unbelief.

Be sure that you do not go to God immediately without Christ, but with Christ in your arms; "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," saith our Saviour. God out of Christ is a consuming fire, and there is no coming at him; so he is a dreadful God and we tremble at his presence, not rely on him. Now we are very apt to go unto him alone, and to to trust in a naked God; for there is much of old Adam in us still: the vessel keeps that savor long wherewith it was

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first seasoned. And at the first, Adam went unto God immediately, and trusted unto him immediately. But now, says Luther, give me a God clothed with flesh; God manifested in the flesh, is the object of our faith. Take heed of a natural faith, for that will end in discouragement.

If you would so exercise your faith as that you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be; then trust in the Lord himself and not in your own duties, your own enlargements, humiliation, or holiness. I know men say that they do not trust in any of these things, but in God alone. But suppose now that a man should come to borrow a sum of money of you, it may be an hundred pounds, and you will not lend him this sum of money unless he gives you a pawn, or unless such and such men be bound with him; will you say that you trust this man alone? Surely no. So, when a poor soul will not trust the Lord unless he have a pawn from God; unless this or that duty, or enlargement shall become bound for God; do you trust God alone? David saith in the lxii. Psalm, at the 5th verse: "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God, for my expectation is from him:" and then see what the issue is at verse 6: "He *only* is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence, I shall not be moved." He had said at verse 2, thus: "He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I shall not be (greatly) moved." But when he had digested this matter a little further and more fully, he leaves out the word *greatly* and saith, "I shall not be moved." Wherefore, would you so trust in the Lord as you may not be moved, trust in the Lord *alone*; although you have nothing to be bound with or for the Lord.

If you would trust in the Lord so as you may not be discouraged: then trust in the Lord before you do act, or move, or work in your business. Some there are that will trust in God when they can go no further; they will act, and work, and do what they can; and when they can go no further, then they say, I will trust in the Lord for the rest. But saith the Psalmist, Psa. xxxvii. 3: "Trust in the Lord and do good;" he doth not say, do good and go as far as you can, and when you can go no further, then trust in the Lord. No, but saith he, "Trust in the Lord and do good." But if you think to do good and to go as far as you can, and then to trust; such a trust as this will end in discouragement,

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and therefore I say, trust in the Lord first before you do work at all.

If you would trust in the Lord, so as you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be, then trust in the Lord Jesus Christ in the first place, before you trust in the promise. Christ's blood is the great and first object of our faith. In times of the Old Testament, they came to Christ by the promise, because Christ was not then come, but promised: now Christ is come, we come to the promises by Christ. Yet mistake not; there is a promise of Christ, and a soul must come to Christ in that promise. But I speak of particular words and promises. Some will not trust in Christ, unless they have this or that particular word set upon their hearts and spirits; and so, indeed, do rather rest on the bare letter of the word, or the sense and impression that is made upon the soul by the setting on of the promise. But all the promises are yea and amen in Christ. Christ therefore is first, and if a man doth trust in the promise first, and so go unto Christ afterwards; then when he wants a particular word or a promise, he will not trust in Christ, but be quite discouraged. But when a man doth trust in the Lord Christ first, and in particular promises afterwards; then, though a particular promise doth not shine forth, yet his faith lives, and he is not discouraged; wherefore, venture upon Jesus Christ first, and then upon the promise as given unto thee by the hand of Christ.

If you would so trust in the Lord, as you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be; then, if ever it pleaseth the Lord to give out a promise to you, never let it go, but hold it fast, although you see nothing but the contrary unto the thing promised. This was Abraham's case: the Lord gave Abraham a promise, but Abraham saw the contrary to the thing promised; yet Abraham did not dispute the promise, he did not stagger at the promise, and say, Surely the Lord hath not given me this promise, it was but a delusion, and I was deceived. No; but Abraham still bears up to the promise, and doth not dispute or stagger at the same. So must you do likewise; if ever the Lord give out a promise to you, hold it, keep it, never let it go, although you do see the contrary.

Oh, but this is hard work indeed; and if I should do so,

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I fear that I should presume, and that I should tempt the Lord. What, trust in the Lord when there is no means in view? Yea, when I see the contrary unto the thing promised? I would do it, but I fear I should presume, and tempt the Lord.

Tempt the Lord, say ye? Dost thou know what it is for to tempt the Lord? It is said of the children of Israel that they tempted the Lord, and said, Is God amongst us? And when thou sayest, after all the experience of God's presence with thee, Is God with me? is not this rather for to tempt the Lord? It is said of the children of Israel, that they "tempted the Lord, and limited the Holy One of Israel:" and when you limit God, and say, I shall never receive this mercy for now I do see the contrary; is not this rather for to tempt the Lord? Properly, and according to scripture phrase, to tempt the Lord, is to put God upon a trial for the satisfying of one's lust; and therefore if you look into Psalm lxxviii., you shall find that these two go together, at verse 18, "They tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust." To put God upon a work for the satisfying of one's lust, is indeed to tempt the Lord. Every putting God upon a trial, is not a tempting God: but to put God upon a trial for the satisfying of one's lust, this is to tempt the Lord: and therefore it is said, the wicked Jews came to our Saviour Christ tempting him, and saying, "Shew us a sign." Gideon desired a sign, and yet he did not tempt the Lord. Why? Because he did not desire a sign to satisfy his lust, but to strengthen his faith. But now these Jews came, and desired a sign to satisfy their lust; and therefore saith our Saviour Christ unto them, "Ye wicked and adulterous generation." How comes the word, adulterous, in there? Why, look, as it is with a woman that is naught, filthy, and unworthy; her husband sending a message to her, and warning her to take heed of such company; when the messenger comes, I doubt, saith she, whether you come from my husband, or no; and what sign have you, that ye come from my husband? she knows that he comes from her husband, but because she may go on in her sin, she asketh a sign: How may I know that you come from my husband? So it was with these wicked Jews, they asked a sign that so they might go on in their sins; where-

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upon our Saviour saith, "Ye wicked and adulterous generation." But now, when a poor, doubting, fearing, trembling soul shall desire to believe, and would fain have some token from the Lord to strengthen his faith, he is not adulterous then, nor doth he tempt the Lord, nor presume: for is it presumption for a man to keep the Sabbath day? No. Why? Because it is commanded. Is it presumption for a child to obey his parents? No. Why? Because it is commanded. So it is commanded for a soul to believe, when all comforts are out of sight, and when he sees nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised. Presumption, properly, is the taking of a thing before it is given or offered. But in this case, the promise is given, and therefore no presumption for to hold it fast. There is a two-fold presumption which you read of in Scripture: one whereby men do rest upon their own works for salvation without Christ: so the Jews did, and therein they presumed of mercy before it was given unto them. Another, whereby men do as they think, or in their way, rest on Christ for salvation, and yet live without works and obedience: and therein they presume also because they take mercy when it is not given them. But if I rest on the promise, or on Christ, that I may be made the more holy, doing what I can to be fruitful in every good work, yet resting upon Christ for all; this is no presumption; why? because I do not take mercy before it is offered: and though I hold the promise fast, when I see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised, yet this is no presumption; why? because I do what is commanded: for, says the apostle, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Now creation work, is out of nothing, it is light out of darkness. Yet thus are we commanded to commit our souls unto God; and therefore though all fail, and we see nothing of the mercy promised, it is no presumption then, to hold and keep fast the promise.

But suppose the Lord hath given me a promise and now after the promise given, I see nothing of the mercy promised and that all my comforts are out of sight; how shall I be able to bear up my heart against all discouragements, notwithstanding I see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised, and to the mercy desired?

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Either thou hast assurance of God's love, or else thou hast not. If thou hast assurance of the love of God, then put thyself often to this disjunction. O my soul, either it is thy duty to believe, or it is not: if it be not thy duty to believe, why dost thou believe at all? If it be not thy duty to believe and rest on Christ, why dost thou rest upon Christ at all? And if it be thy duty to rest on Christ and believe, why then shouldest thou not believe at all times, and trust perfectly unto the Lord? And if you have assurance, then actuate your assurance, mind yourself of your privileges, and your interest in Christ; then you will say unto yourself: What though I have nothing but bad tidings from this world, yet notwithstanding, I have nothing but good tidings from the other world, and from my Father above: and if Christ be mine, then all is mine, life is mine, and death is mine; and what though all my comforts be dead and are gone, and are all out of sight, yet Christ is a living Christ, Christ is a living Saviour; and therefore be of good comfort, O my soul.

But if you do want the assurance of the love of God, then yet you must and may look on Christ, who is the brazen serpent, the only brazen serpent, and your very looking upon him in the time of your discouragement, shall go for faith: "Look unto me (saith he) from all the ends of the earth, and be saved."

Again; If you want assurance, you may and must turn your eye, and your thoughts, from those objections that do invade your faith. It is said of Abraham, "That he considered not the weakness of his own body:" and this was imputed unto him for believing, that he considered not what might invade his faith: and so this shall be imputed unto you for faith, if, when these objections shall come in upon you, you turn your eye from them, unto Jesus Christ, and do not consider them.

And if you do want assurance, then set yourselves to believe that you do believe. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen;" and therefore if your faith be not seen, you must believe that you do believe; thou must believe sometimes that thou hast faith. As there is a feeling in prayer, so faith hath its feeling too; and therefore if you cannot see your faith, you must believe that you do believe. And whether

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you have assurance, or have not assurance, consider these few thing as some helps to your faith in this case:

1. That God doth never lead his people unto any great mercy, but first he doth put the sentence of death upon all means that do tend unto it. Thus it was with Abraham, so with Joseph, so with David, and many others.

2. That it is a great sin to limit God's mercy, as well as to limit his power: you say it is a great sin to limit the power of God; the children of Israel are condemned for this; they limited the Holy One of Israel; they tempted the Lord and limited the Holy One of Israel. Now, doth not a man limit God when he limits his mercy, as well as when he limits his power? And when you say, you shall never have such a mercy granted, because I now see the contrary; is not this to limit his mercy?

3. That when the Lord hath given out a promise to his people, he doth then sometimes try whether they will trust to his naked word, or no. Christ hath his times to try men; and when he gives out a promise, and bringeth the soul into a quite contrary condition, this is his trying time: and therefore hath the Lord now given out a promise unto you; and do you see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised? Say unto thine own soul, O my soul, it may be Christ is now trying of me, it may be this is my trying time, and therefore now will I wait on God.

4. That God doth oftentimes fulfil one promise by denying another. Hath the Lord therefore given thee a promise, and doest thou see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised. Now know, and remember, that we have by not having; God doth give by denying, and fulfils some promises by not fulfilling others.

5. That when we see nothing but what is contrary unto our help then is Christ's time to help. I read, as I remember, but twice in the New Testament, that mention is made of Christ's hour: once in John xiii. "And he knowing that his hour was coming," and that was the hour of darkness: once in John ii. 4, when his mother came unto him for wine, he said, "Woman, mine hour is not yet come:" but afterwards, when their own wine was done, and their pots were filled with water; then he turns their water into wine, then Christ's hour was come. So now, when all our bottles are dry, when

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there is no wine of comfort in our own bottles, then is Christ's hour; and when the hour of darkness is upon our condition, then is Christ's hour: and if thou wouldst but say unto thine own soul: Soul, Christ's time and hour is an hour of darkness; Christ's time is a time when there is no wine in our own bottles. Now thus it is with me; I have no wine left in my own bottles, my bottles are all dry and empty, and there is an hour of darkness upon my condition, therefore this time is the time for Christ to help me. This would cause you to wait on God, and exercise faith in the lowest condition, even when you see nothing but the contrary unto your desires, and the Lord's promises.

6. That either you are under an extraordinary affliction or an ordinary. Either you are under an ordinary temptation or an extraordinary. Either you are under an extraordinary desertion or an ordinary. Either thy strait or stress and trouble is ordinary, or else it is extraordinary. If it be an ordinary trouble, why then are you troubled more than ordinary; why are you discouraged extraordinarily? If your affliction or misery be extraordinary, then either God hath brought you into this condition, and hath led you heretofore in a way of extraordinary deliverance or of ordinary deliverance. If God have led you heretofore in a way of ordinary deliverance what mean those wonderful incomes of love and supporting grace that you have had, when your soul hath been ready to sink and to die within you? And if the Lord hath heretofore led you in a way of extraordinary deliverance, and hath now brought you into this extraordinary condition; then know from the Lord, that it is as great a sin for you now not to trust in God for extraordinary mercy, as it would have been for you not to have trusted in the Lord for ordinary deliverance in an ordinary case. You know how it was with the children of Israel, they sinned greatly in the wilderness, so much that the Lord kept them out of the land of Canaan, and many of their carcases fell in the wilderness; what was the reason? The text tells us they did not believe. Wherein was their unbelief? They did not trust God for meat in the wilderness. Why, but that had been a miracle to have meat in the wilderness; true, yet this was their unbelief, that they did not trust God for meat in the wilderness. Again, they sinned and did not trust God

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for water. Why, but it was a miracle for them to have water in that place, where no water was naturally; true, yet because the Lord had led them in a way of miracles before, they sinned now in that they did not trust God for miracles; and it was as great a sin that they did not trust God for miracles, being led in a way of miracles, as that they did not trust God for ordinary mercies, when the Lord led them in ways of ordinary mercies. So I say to you; if God lead you in a way of ordinaries, then must you trust God for ordinaries; but if ordinary means cannot be had, and God have led you in a way of extraordinaries, it is then a sin in you to tie God to ordinaries. Are you therefore in an extraordinary case and strait? Know that it is no sin now to trust God for extraordinary mercy, help and relief.

7. And if after all these things your hearts fail you and you would so trust in God, as that you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be; then ask thine own soul these questions.—First: Whether there be any gain by doubting; whether there is any spiritual gain to be made by doubting? Faith purifies the heart but doth doubting purify the heart? Secondly: Whether there is anything in all the world more pleasing to God, than to trust the Lord, in and by Jesus Christ, when all comforts are out of view, and when you see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised? Thirdly: Whether you must not venture upon Christ at the last; and if you must venture upon Christ at the last, why not now as well as at the last? When a man comes to go over a river, though he ride once and again into the water, and comes out saying, I fear it is too deep for me; yet considering that there is no other way for him he resolves to venture; for, saith he, the longer I stay the higher the waters will rise, and there is no other way for me, and I must through at last, as good at the first as at the last; and so he doth venture through and is safe. Thus it is here. You must venture upon Christ at the last, there is no other way but venturing upon Jesus Christ, thou must do it at the last; and were it not as good for you to do it at the first as at the last? Surely, the longer you stay the harder you will find it to venture, and the more difficulties will arise upon the work of believing. You say now, Oh, but my heart is not humbled; Oh, but I am a great sinner, and should I venture upon

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Jesus Christ? But will thy heart be more humbled by keeping from Christ; and shalt thou be a less sinner by keeping from him? No, certainly; but the longer you stay from Christ, the harder work it will be to venture upon Christ at the last. Wherefore, if there be ever a poor, drooping, doubting, fearing, trembling heart in all this congregation, know, that I do here in the name of the Lord, call out to you, and say, O soul, man or woman, venture, venture, venture upon Christ now; for you must come to this venturing work at the last, and if ever, it is true here, better at the first than at the last. Must you not venture upon Christ at the last; and if at last why not now? Thus ply and follow your own souls with these three questions. And,

8. If you would so trust in God as that you may not be discouraged whatever your condition be; then consider frequently and seriously, what a blessed thing it is for to wait on God and for God. Yea, what a reasonable thing it is that you should wait for him and on him. For,

He hath waited on you and for your repentance. He waited in the days of Noah for the repentance of the old world, and he waited long, 1 Peter iii. 20, a long while also hath he waited for your repentance; and if he had not waited long, what had become of you? Yea, and he hath not only waited, but he doth still, and will wait to shew mercy, Isa. xxx. 18, he waiteth to shew mercy on them that wait for his mercy. Now shall God wait for us and for our repentance; and shall not we wait for him and his grace?

Ye have waited on others and do still wait on others; who is there in all the world that you deal with, but you do wait upon; will ye instance in great men; must you not wait long to speak with them; yea, though it be for their own good? It is recorded of Henry, the emperor of Germany, that when he came to speak with the Pope, the Pope made him and his wife and eldest son, stand waiting three days in the cold winter season at his palace gates, before he would speak with the emperor. Will ye instance in your inferiors and such as are beneath you; must you not wait even for them that do wait on you? Your servants, if you bid them do a thing, you must wait till it be done; and if you bid them come, you must wait till they come. Or will ye instance in other creatures? Do you not wait on the sun for

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light; on the water for coolness; on the fire for heat? Now if we wait on the creatures, all the creatures, is it not reasonable that we wait on the Creator? Yet further, do ye not sometimes wait on the lusts of men? Yea, ye have sometimes waited on your own lusts, "The adulterer waiteth for the twilight," saith Job. And how often have you waited for an opportunity of sinning? Now will ye wait on men, your inferiors, other creatures, yea, on the wills and lusts of men; and will you not wait on the grace of God?

Look when you give over waiting then may deliverance come; and if it come then how will you be filled with shame and confusion? 2 Kings vi. 33, the king said, "It is a vain thing to wait on God any longer." And if ye look into the next chapter, at verse 1, ye shall find that deliverance came in the next words. No sooner had the King said, "It is a vain thing to wait on God any longer," but the prophet in the next words saith: "To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gates of Samaria." chap. vii. 1. So that deliverance doth sometimes come when men give over waiting. And if deliverance do thus come to you, what shame and grief will this be to you; how will you befool yourself and say, Oh, what a fool was I that I could not wait a little longer? I have given over waiting, and lo, now deliverance is come and I have no comfort in it.

When you give over waiting, then you lose all your former labours; though you have performed many duties, yet if you do not wait upon God therein, you do lose all your prayers. It is said of Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 6: "That he inquired of the Lord, who answered him not;" and so he sought unto a woman that had a familiar spirit, ver. 7. Yet 1 Chron. x. 14, it is said that "he inquired not of the Lord." He inquired and he inquired not; how doth this agree? Well, for though he did inquire of the Lord, yet because he did not wait upon God therein, but gave over waiting, his inquiring in scripture phrase is said to be no inquiring; prayer without waiting, in scripture phrase, is no prayer. Look when a man doth give over waiting, then doth he lose all his labour; his former prayer is nothing, his former duty nothing; it shall not once be remembered or imputed to him.

On the other side: if you wait on God he will not alway

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forget your work of faith; though he may seem to forget you, yet "the patient abiding of the meek, shall not be forgotten for ever." Psal. ix. 18. God will come and visit you in due time, "He that doth come, will come, and will not tarry;" yea, and your very waiting (that I may speak with reverence) will make him come the sooner. It is not so with men; if you expect a friend, you do go forth to meet him; but it is not your expecting, waiting, that will make him come. But so it is with God; your very expecting of him and waiting for him will make him come; and therefore the holy men in scripture use this argument with God for mercy: "Let me not be ashamed, for I have waited on thee;" yea, and if God do come, he will come with a recompence, and pay you all your forbearance money, Is. xxxv.; yea and when he doth come, you shall be able to triumph in his appearing, and say, "Lo this is our God, we have waited for him:" if you have not waited, you cannot triumph in his appearance; but if you wait, you shall say when he comes, Lo this is my God and I have waited for him; yea, the Lord will not only come, but he will come with a blessing, for "Blessed are all those that wait on him;" yea, he will not only bless you upon your waiting, but he will strengthen you therein, Isa. xl.: "Those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Oh, what a blessed thing is it then for to wait on God; who would not hope, trust, wait on the Lord? Is there anything to be gotten by your sad discouragements, "O ye of little faith?" Are you able to alter one hair of your condition by all your thoughtfulness? Is it not much better now, for to wait on God? Why then do you not call your own heart aside, and say, Come O my soul, why hast thou limited the Holy One of Israel thus long; why hast thou dishonoured Christ thus long by thy vain fears? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope, trust, wait on God; for he is the health of my countenance and my God."

And thus now I have done with this great argument: ye have had the patience to hear it, the Lord give you grace to practise it. I conclude all with the words of my commission: "Ye that are of a fearful spirit, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you." Is. xxv. 3.

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SERMONS ON FAITH.

THE SPIRITUAL ACTINGS OF FAITH THROUGH NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITIES.—THE GREAT THINGS FAITH CAN DO.—THE GREAT THINGS FAITH CAN SUFFER.

IN FIVE SERMONS,

PREACHED AT ST. MARGARET'S NEW FISH STREET, AND OTHER PLACES. A.D. 1645—55.

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[The small volume first issued by the Countess of Huntingdon, contained these Five Sermons; and with them were likewise inserted, as Sermons IV. and V., the first and the last Sermons of the foregoing work, entitled, "A Lifting Up for the Downcast:" thus supplying the little work so popularly known as Bridge's Seven Sermons on Faith.]

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SERMONS ON FAITH.

SERMON I.

THE SPIRITUAL ACTINGS OF FAITH THROUGH NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITIES.

" And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb."—Rom. iv. 19. *And being not weak [or weakened] in faith, &c.*

In this latter part of the chapter ye have the commendation of Abraham's faith; described from the *subject* or *matter* of that he believed, in the 18th and 19th verses. From the *manner* of his believing, " He staggered not (at the 20th verse) at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith," &c. From the *cause* of his faith, the sight of God's all-sufficiency and faithfulness, " Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." From the *effect* of his faith, " He gave glory to God."

First of all for the *subject* or the *matter* that he believed, more plainly expressed in the 18th verse: " Who against hope believed in hope, that he should become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be." Aggravated and enlarged in this 19th verse. The *matter* that he believed was enclosed with many difficulties. He believed that he should be the father of many nations, and that in his seed all the nations of the world should be blessed; herein he had an eye unto Jesus Christ: but now his own body was dead, being about an hundred years old, and Sarah's womb dead; yet notwithstanding, says the text, " Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb."

You will say, How can this be that the apostle here says,

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"Abraham considered not his own body being now dead," when we read, Gen. xvii. 17, unto which story this chapter relates, it is said, that "Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed in his heart, and said, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah that is ninety years old, bear?" Did not Abraham here consider the deadness of his own body, and the deadness of Sarah's womb? Why does the apostle say thus then?

Some answer it thus, that the apostle here speaks of the first giving out of the promise unto Abraham, which we read of in the xiith of Genesis; but that cannot be, he was not then an hundred years old: "He considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old." And so it is said he was an hundred years old, in the xviith chapter of Genesis and the 17th verse, therefore it must relate unto that.

Others, they answer it thus, that Abraham indeed at the first did consider his own body, and did doubt through unbelief; but afterwards Abraham recollected himself, and got over that unbelief: but the apostle, he speaks the contrary in the 20th verse, "He staggered not at the promise through unbelief."

Others, they answer it, by labouring to find out some mystical interpretation of those words, "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old, and shall Sarah that is ninety years old, bear?" as if Abraham, say they, had said thus: Lord, thou hast some secret meaning in these words, I pray thee speak it out unto me, and tell me plainly thy meaning. And therefore, say they, God answered to that purpose in the 19th verse, "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed;" I mean according to my words, Sarah shall bear thee a son indeed.

But we need not strain for any mystical interpretation or expression. When Abraham says, "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old?" Gen. xvii. 17, they are words not of doubting, but words of inquiring; Abraham desiring to be further satisfied, and rightly to understand the meaning of the promise, and rightly understanding the meaning of the promise, says the apostle, he did not much mind, he did not throughly mind, he did not stand poring

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upon or considering the deadness of his own body, or the deadness of Sarah's womb.

There are three things, especially, considerable in these words.

First of all, That Abraham's body and Sarah's body are dead, after God gives out a promise of a great seed of his.

Secondly, That notwithstanding this, yet Abraham believed and is commended for it. "He being not weak in the faith, considered not his own body being now dead."

And thirdly, That in all this he had an eye unto Jesus Christ, as I shall shew you afterward. Accordingly I would take up three observations thus:

First, When God intends to fulfil his promise by giving any special blessing to the children of Abraham, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon the blessing, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

Secondly, That then, and then especially it is the duty of all the children of Abraham to trust in God.

And Thirdly, that no difficulty can stand before faith; true, saving, justifying faith carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ.

I begin with the first at this time.

When God intends to fulfil his promise by giving any special blessing to the children of Abraham, to believers, he does first put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

A promise of a great seed like the stars of heaven, and the sand upon the sea-shore, is given to Abraham; but before it is fulfilled, Abraham's body is dead, and Sarah's womb dead; the sentence of death put upon the mercy, and the means that do lead unto it; and herein Abraham is held forth for our example, it was written not for his sake alone, at the 23rd verse, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, at the 24th verse. And as thus it fell out with Abraham, so it falls out with all the children of Abraham, with all believers, when God intends to give any special or great mercy by fulfilling his promise, he does first of all write down the sentence of death upon the mercy, and upon the means that do tend unto it.

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The saints and people of God, they are called the "Redeemed of the Lord," Isa. lxii. 12., not only because they are redeemed from hell and from wrath, but because that they have their mercies and blessings in a way of redemption; there is a line of that great mercy of redemption that runs through all the mercies which they have; they have health redeemed out of the hand of sickness, they have liberty redeemed out of the hand of straitness, they have peace redeemed out of the hand of war, they have assurance redeemed out of the hand of doubting and unbelief, they have mercy redeemed out of the hand of misery, they have joys and comforts redeemed out of the hand of grief: they are the redeemed of the Lord; whatsoever great mercy or blessing they have, they have it in a way of redemption. Thus it was with Abraham. And was it not thus with Joseph? I shall not have time to speak of the patriarchs all of them, Joseph you know had a promise by way of vision, "That his sheaf should be higher than all the sheaves, and all the sheaves of his brethren should bow down to his," Gen xxxvii., the sun and the moon should bow down before him, his father and mother; this promise was afterward fulfilled when his brethren went down into Egypt, and bowed before him there, and his father went down into Egypt; but first of all Joseph is sold into Egypt, the sentence of death put upon the mercy; the promise did bring forth, but it had a sore and a hard labour first.

And was it not thus with the people of Israel? They had a promise of great increase like the sands of the sea, and that they should be brought into the land of Canaan; first the sentence of death is put upon both these, their males are to be cut off from Egypt, and before they come into Canaan, they must go into a howling wilderness; thus the sentence of death passes first upon the mercy before they do come to it.

And was it not thus with David? David had a kingdom promised him, that he should be the king of Israel, but first of all David must be thrust out of the kingdom, he must into the wilderness, he must be hunted up and down there like a partridge, David must be a traitor first before he can be a king, and David must be a rebel first in the eyes of the king before he can come to the kingdom and to the throne; he

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had the mercy afterward, but at the first, sentence of death was put upon it.

So Job, a great, and a large, and a comfortable estate that God gave unto him, but first he is plundered and spoiled of all, a sentence of death passes upon all his comforts; and is not this God's dealing with his people still? look I pray into the xith of the Revelation, and ye shall see how the two witnesses are to fear; "After three days and an half, (at verse 11.) the Spirit of Life from God entered into them; and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them which saw them: and they heard a great voice from heaven; saying unto them, come up hither;" but I pray mark, Rev. xi. they are killed first; at the latter end of verse 7, "He shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them, and their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt; and they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves:" there is a Spirit of life enters into them afterwards. Aye, but first of all a sentence of death passes upon them; this is God's way and manner of dealing with his people, with the children of Abraham, with those that are true believers.

What reason for it? This seems somewhat strange: not a blessing or a mercy of any great importance, or concernment, but the sentence of death passes upon it first: what reason for this? Why is God pleased to take this way with his own people, the children of Abraham?

First of all, God doth so give blessings and mercies unto his own people, as "That he may be most of all seen therein." Beloved, God doth not only give us these outward creature comforts for to supply our wants, but to bear up the honour of his own greatness. You have not fish out of the water only to supply your wants; nor fruit from the earth only to supply your wants; nor light from the sun only to supply your wants, but to bear up the honour of God's greatness also. When he gives unto his people, he does give in such a way as may most of all bear up the honour of his own greatness. If it were only to supply their wants, then possibly, the sentence of death should never come upon the second cause; but now it is also to bear up his own honour,

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the honour of his own greatness and that is done this way.

Hereby God is known to be a *living God*: so long as there is life in the means, God is not so well known to be a living God. But when all means are dead and yet the mercy comes, Oh, says a soul, now I see that God is a living God.

Hereby the *power* of God is made known; he must needs be great in power that can say to things that are not, *Be*; and give a resurrection unto dead things. So long as there is strength and ability in the means, men do not so much consider the power and the all-sufficiency of God. But when all means are strengthless, and all means are dead, and yet the mercy comes, Oh, says a soul, now I see that God is a God almighty, God all-sufficient.

Hereby he is made known under the name of Jehovah; a Being that gives a being unto all other beings; faithful in fulfilling his promise: so long as there is a being in the second cause and in the means, God is not known by the name Jehovah; but when there is a sentence of death put upon the second cause, and yet the mercy comes, Oh, now, says a soul, I see that God is Jehovah, a Being that gives a being unto all other beings. Therefore God does it.

And then, again, secondly, God does go this way with his people, with believers, the children of Abraham, that they may learn more to trust unto him, to trust unto God alone. You know what the apostle says, in 1 Tim. v. 5, "She that is a widow and desolate, trusteth in God." We seldom trust in God until a desolation come upon the means. A widow that is desolate trusteth in God: when desolation comes upon the means, then we learn for to trust in God. One that does learn to swim, so long as he can touch the bottom, can touch the earth with his foot, he does not commit himself unto the stream; but when he can feel no bottom, then he commits himself unto the mercy of the waters. Now so long as a man can stand upon the second cause, he can feel the bottom with his feet, he does not commit himself to the stream of mercy; but when once the second cause is gone, and he cannot feel the bottom, then he commits himself unto the stream of mercy. And you shall see the apostle gives you this account of it, in 2 Cor. i. 9, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in our-

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selves, but in God which raiseth the dead." This is another reason why God is pleased to go this way.

Again, thirdly, it is fit that all believers should be conformable to Jesus Christ. It was thus with Christ. We read in that iind of the Philippians, of our Lord and Saviour, "that God highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name." But see, first of all a sentence of death passes upon his name: "He was made of no reputation," verse 7; he was made of no name first: "And being of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: wherefore God hath highly exalted, and given him a name which is above every name." He brought salvation, life to light; he spoiled Satan; but first of all he was spoiled himself, and a sentence of death passes upon him before he brought things unto life, and he gives you to understand thus much himself, and here he holds forth himself for our example: in the xiith chapter of John, says he, at the 23rd verse, "The time is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Well, but how? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Thus he comes to his glory: he must die first, and so he must come to glory. "If any man serve me (says he at the 26th verse), let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." This is the way that Christ went, and this way God took with Christ. Love loves to be like unto Jesus Christ; and faith loves to go in the garment of Jesus Christ: as with him, so with the saints.

And then again, fourthly, God is pleased thus to order things in the dispensations of his grace and mercy, that the comforts of his people may be the more sure and stedfast. If our comforts hang at the girdle of the creature, they are most uncertain; but if they be laid up in God, in his promise, upon his power, then they are certain. He that is engaged in the crowd, must be carried to and fro in the crowd; and he that is in a ship, must be carried as the ship is. If a man stand upon a bank of ice, he is apt to slide; but if he stand upon dry ground, he stands more sure. All the second causes, they make but a bank of ice, and when a man stands on them, and his comforts on them, he is apt to slide; the

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only dry ground is God's power, and God's faithfulness, and his promise.

That a man's comforts therefore may not slide, but may be more sure and stedfast; God takes this course with his people, putting a sentence of death upon the mercy, and upon all the means that do lead unto it, before he gives it out unto the soul.

Aye, but you will say, this shakes the very foundation of all my comfort; for if this be true, that when God intends any special mercy to the children of Abraham, he does first put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it; then surely I am none of the children of Abraham, I never had any special mercy yet given unto me, I do not find that it hath been so to me.

No: what then? because your experience does not speak it, is it not therefore true? Some would have the sun set by their watch, and not their watch set by the sun: some measure the truth of all the doctrines that they hear by their own experience, and if their own experience speak them true, then they are true; otherwise not. But I say, what then? It may be thou art a man or woman, that the Lord never gave out a promise to thee, not a promise to thy soul; some there are in prayer, that by the strength of their memory can reach in a promise; and when art and memory reaches in a promise into prayer, the sentence of death does not then pass indeed; but when the Lord gives out a promise to the soul, then the sentence of death passes upon the business, upon the mercy, and upon the means that do lead unto it. I appeal unto all the saints here: whether ever had ye any great mercy in all your life, but, first of all, there was a sentence of death passed upon it, and upon all the means that did lead unto it? And therefore, though thou sayest, this shakes the foundation of thy comfort; truly, better a rotten foundation should be shaken, than stand.

But, you will say, is it so with the saints in regard of all their spiritual blessings too?

Yes, when ever did the Lord give an ordinance to his people in the way of a special mercy, but first of all the sentence of death came upon the business, and upon all the means that did lead unto it?

When did the Lord ever give any grace to his people, but

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first of all the sentence of death past? When ever did the Lord give any encouragement in duty to any of his children, but first a sentence of death past? When ever did the Lord give any great enjoyment of himself to any of his children, but first the sentence of death past? When ever was a poor soul made fruitful, but first a sentence of death past? Oh, never any more barren than I, never any more dead than I. Our Lord and Saviour Christ, he promises his disciples, that he would send them the Holy Ghost, the Comforter: but before the Comforter came, he goes away himself from them, and they were left, and never in such a sad condition as immediately before the Comforter came. And if you mind it here, though Abraham had many acts of faith, yet this act of faith is singled out from all the rest of the actings of Abraham's faith; wherein Abraham is held forth as a pattern for all believers. The grace of a godly man, is his soul's resurrection; we are risen, being risen with Christ; by grace we rise. Now, says the apostle, it is in regard of the resurrection as with seed that is sown; it first dies, and then it rises. The saints and people of God, they have all their graces and all their comforts in a way of resurrection. This is the way therefore God takes with his people. Only take along with you these three or four cautional considerations.

This is to be understood concerning the great and the special blessings and mercies which believers have. There are some blessings and mercies that are more common and ordinary; some that are more special and greater. I do not say that this is true concerning every common and ordinary blessing that a believer hath, that he hath no blessing, no mercy, but first of all a sentence of death is put upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it; but, I say, it is true concerning the great and the special blessings and mercies. We read of Abraham that he had other children; it was not so in regard of them; but Isaac was the great blessing, it was so in regard of Isaac. The children of Israel, they had their daily bread and their water; their daily provisions, we do not find it in regard of them: but they had manna from heaven, and they had water out of the rock; they had special water, special bread, so in regard of these. And therefore if you look into Exod. xv. you shall find there, at the last verse, "They came to Elim, where were twelve wells of

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water, (according to the twelve tribes, every tribe had one,) and three-score and ten palm trees," (according to the number of those that went down to Egypt). But now before they had these twelve wells of water, ye read at the 29nd verse, that "they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." At the 25th verse, you read of waters they had that were very sweet; but before that the water was bitter, it was called Marah. "And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." The special waters and blessings of God's people come to them thus.

Again, the sentence of death may be put upon your mercy in another man's hand. It was a great mercy even to Isaac, that by him all the nations of the world should be blessed; but the sentence of death was put upon this mercy in Abraham's hand, as well as in his own. Thou comest, it may be, to the preaching of the word, and thou art converted by such a sermon; thou dost not see how the sentence of death was put upon this mercy before thou hadst it: may be the sentence of death was put upon it in the minister's hand, in the preacher's hand; may be he had laid aside those doctrines and those truths, and thought to preach upon another matter; may be the sentence of death was put upon thy mercy in his hand. So sometimes it is in another man's hand.

Again, though the sentence of death be put upon a mercy before a believer comes to it; yet it is much according to the life of the mercy that is afterward. If the life be great, the death is great; if the life be small, the death is small. And sometimes the sentence of death falls mostly upon the apprehension; as it was with Hagar; she was in the wilderness, and she thought she should die for want of water; Only, said she, I will not see my child die; and there was a well by. So that now, here the sentence of death lay mostly upon her own apprehension. And thus you have it also with Joshua, of whom you read in the ist of Joshua: the Lord makes him a great promise, "Now therefore arise,

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(says he, at the second verse) go over this Jordan, thou and all this people; every place the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." And at the latter end of the 5th verse, "I will be with thee, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Now if you look into the viith chapter, you find that Joshua had "rent his clothes, (ver. 6,) and fell to the earth upon his face, before the ark of the Lord, until even-tide; and Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan." Why, what is the matter? You read, "There went up three thousand men of the Israelites, and thirty-six men of them were smote by the men of Ai." Here was cause now of fear, but no cause of such expressions as did fall from Joshua: a sentence of death passes upon the mercy, but it lay mostly upon the apprehension of Joshua. Sometimes it falls more upon the apprehension, and less upon the thing; sometimes it falls more upon the thing, and less upon the apprehension: but always more or less, when God intends any great or special mercy to his people, to the children of Abraham, he does first cause the sentence of death to pass upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

You will say then, Why does God give the promise? I confess this is true, I seldom had any great mercy in all my days, but first of all the sentence of death came upon it: but one thing seems very strange to me, that the Lord should give out a promise; first a promise given out, and then comes the sentence of death upon the mercy, and upon the means that do lead unto it. What should be the meaning of this; why does the Lord deal thus, give out a promise first?

A promise is given out twice. At the first, before we do use the means, to encourage us thereunto; afterwards upon some encouragements that we do meet with in the use of means.

When the Lord does first give out the promise, a sentence of death then passes, that he may shew you where the mercy lies. As the mother does deal by her child; shews the child where the meat stands; Child, thou art not yet fit for it, thou

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shalt have it in due time, look, here it stands. Or as a father that shews the child where the money lies; Child, time is not yet, but there the money lies, there is the bag it is in, none shall take it from thee. So does God do. You think that the mercy lies in the second cause; No, says God, here, here is the bag that it lies in. Therefore he does first give out the promise, that he may tell the soul where the mercy lies, show the soul where it is.

And then again. God does therefore give out the promise, notwithstanding the sentence of death; because he intends not to give the mercy presently. You think, it may be, that as soon as you have a promise set on upon your heart, you shall presently enjoy the mercy: nay, but God does therefore give you a promise, because you shall not have it presently.

As for example: If I would pay a man my money down presently, I would not give him a bond; but my very giving him a bond, argues, I am not to pay him presently. So the Lord, he gives out a promise, and you think now, you must have it presently: No, says the Lord, but because a sentence of death is to come, and thou shalt not have it presently, therefore I give out the promise.

Again, God does therefore give out the promise, notwithstanding his sentence of death, that your hearts may be borne up against all discouragements, when the womb of the second cause shall be dead. God sees that his child, or servant is going into a great storm: There is such a child of mine, says God, he is going into a great storm, and his faith will be put to a great stress; therefore I will furnish him with cables and good anchors; I will throw him out a promise. You think, because God gives you a promise, because God gives you cables, because God gives you anchors, therefore you shall come to land presently: the Lord does therefore give you a promise, because he does see that a storm is coming: you mistake the way of God in his promise; this is God's way, he gives out a promise, and then causes the sentence of death to pass upon the business, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

I come unto the application.

Whilst I stand upon this truth, methinks I see matter of great and everlasting encouragement to all the saints and peo-

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ple of God: be not discouraged, but rather keep silence, wait and stay upon God when the darkest times go over your head: when the sentence of death is put upon the mercy, and blessing which you do most desire. This is God's way, when he intends any great mercy to any of his children, he puts a sentence of death first upon it. Oh, when death sits upon the means, then we conclude all is dead, the mercy dead, all is gone, and we are very apt to have despairing thoughts and to make despondent conclusions. "I said in my haste (says he) all men are liars," Ps. cxvi. 11: Samuel says, I shall have a kingdom; the sentence of death is put upon the business; "all men are liars." So in another place: "I said in my haste, I am cast out of thy sight," Ps. xxxi. 22: shall I see the face of God? nothing but death upon all the means; I am cast out of thy sight. So with Hezekiah, "I said, (says he) I shall be cast out of the land of the living," Isa. xxxviii. 11. And so now-a-days: I thought indeed we should have had a reformation; but now nothing but sad division: I thought we should have had free enjoyment of all the ordinances; but now the sentence of death put upon all. I had thought I should have had assurance; and never doubted again; but now death is put upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it: all is dead, all is gone: oh, we are very apt to be much discouraged, and to make strange conclusions when death comes upon the means: it is a hard thing to keep from such conclusions: for the business comes to a vote, as it were, it comes to a vote before the soul. The question is, saith the soul, whether I shall be saved or no? As many as are for the affirmative, say, Aye: Aye, says the promise. As many as are for the negative, say, No: No, says threatenings; and No, says guilty conscience; No, no, no, say a thousand sins. The question is, whether I shall be be delivered or no? I am in such an affliction and straitness; the question is, whether I shall be delivered or no? As many as are for the affirmative say, Aye: Aye, says the promise. As many as are for the negative, say, No: No, says providence; No, say all second causes, and all the means round about; No, no, no, say a thousand sins. Now my beloved, it is a hard thing for a poor soul to give an affirmative with the bare promise, when all else gives a negative: but the reason is, because this truth that I am

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now upon, is not by you; were but this truth by you, it were easy to give an affirmative with the bare promise, when death sits upon all the means. As for example: suppose our army be in the field, engaged with the enemy; a troop routed, a regiment routed, a wing routed; Come, says a carnal soldier, fellow soldiers, shift for your lives, for we are all undone and spoiled: Nay, not so, says the believing soldier, this is God's way; when God intends any great mercy to his people, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it: and therefore, come, fall on, fall on, brave hearts, fall on; for this is God's way: and so it proves many times.

Or suppose a man be in some personal strait or affliction: the devil, the tempter he comes; Ye see in what strait ye are, there is no means at all for your deliverance, you had as good take such and such an indirect course; why should you wait any longer? Nay, says the soul, but I have learned otherwise: when God intends any great mercy to his children, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it; and therefore I will wait on God still, I may be in God's way, this may be God's way; it may be the Lord is in a way to give me a greater mercy than ever I had in all my days. Oh, my beloved, that you would but gird this truth upon your thigh, how might you cut off all discouragements as they rise upon you.

You will say, How does this cut off discouragements? Some things there are that die, and never rise again, as beasts; some things there are that die, and do rise again, as men. The sentence of death is upon the mercy that I do much desire; and did I know, indeed, that it should rise again, it were a matter of great encouragement to me, but that I do not know.

For answer, I shall only say thus much to it: A *may be* of mercy is a sufficient ground for our reliance and support of the soul upon God. Mark, there are two acts of faith, the faith of reliance and the faith of assurance; assurance that causes joy, reliance that causes quietness. Accordingly there are two objects of faith: a *shall be* of mercy, that is the object of assurance; a *may be* of mercy, that is the object of reliance. Ye shall observe, therefore, that when the Lord would call out his people to an act of reliance upon him, he

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holds out a *may be* of mercy to them: "Seek the Lord, ye meek of the earth, seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger:" ye know the place in Zephaniah (ii.8). And if ye look into 1 Sam. xiv., ye shall find that this *may be* was that encouraged Jonathan; at the 6th verse, "Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few." It may be the Lord will work for us, for there is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few. This encouraged Jonathan, and hereby he encourages his armour-bearer. So, when a man can say thus, It may be the Lord will shew mercy to me in such a work, or in such a business, there is no restraint with him; it causes the soul to rely on God. Now this doctrine, it holds forth a *may be* to you, a *may be* of mercy to you; though you have not an assurance that this mercy, that hath the sentence of death upon it, will certainly rise again; yet, notwithstanding, seeing it is God's way, this is God's way with the children of Abraham; when he intends to give a special mercy, he does put a sentence of death upon it. This holds forth a *may be* unto you; a *may be* of mercy this doctrine holds forth unto you. Why, therefore, my beloved, should we not rely upon God, when the sentence of death is put upon the means, upon all the means that do lead unto the mercy that you most desire?

But you will say unto me, Is there no way, no means to spy out God's meaning in this particular? Oh, that I did but know whether this mercy that hath the sentence of death upon it, shall rise again! How shall one know that; are there no means to know it; whether a mercy shall rise again when the sentence of death is upon it?

I shall speak but two things unto that, briefly.

1. A christian may have some persuasion of the resurrection of his mercy, when the sentence of death is put upon it, by the frequent visitings of the promise. Mark, when God intends any special mercy to his people, he gives out a promise; then comes the sentence of death: but if he intends to fulfil the promise, he does cause the promise frequently to visit the soul, even when the sentence of death is upon the business; often to knock at the door of the soul.

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When there is good will between two young people kept from marrying by their parents, and the young man often is at the house, ye say, Surely, if the parents were but dead, there would be a marriage quickly, by the frequent visitings. So, now, when the promise does frequently visit the soul in the time when the sentence of death is upon the business, it argues that the mercy is not quite dead. Moses had a promise in a vision: the bush burning, and not consuming; Israel in Egypt, and not destroyed. Moses, he carries his promise along with him in his bosom; indeed we do not read of it till Moses comes to die; and when Moses comes to bless the people: "The good will of him that dwelt in the bush, be with you," Deut. xxxiii. 16. This same promise kept Moses company all along; and though the sentence of death was often put upon the business, yet, notwithstanding, in that the mercy came and visited him, it argued that this promise was not quite dead. So by the frequent visitings of the same promise; "Though the tree be cut down, yet through the scent of those waters it shall rise again," Job xiv. 9.

2. But especially in the second place: a christian may have some comfortable persuasion that the mercy is not dead but sleepeth: by the first fruits of the promise. When the Jews kept the feast of the first fruits, they knew that the harvest was not far off. And so, when the first fruits of a mercy comes, we may know that the mercy or blessing is not far off. Beloved, God does use to give the first fruits of a blessing before the great blessing comes. It is a good speech of one; says he, God does with the same seal seal divers matters; one mercy is made a seal to another. God does give one mercy as a pledge of another, and as a seal of another. And so our Saviour Christ does, in that ixth chapter of Matthew, we read of a certain ruler that came to him for his daughter; and he said (at the 18th verse), "My daughter is even now dead, but come, and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live." Here was his belief, that he should say, Come, and lay thine hand upon her; Christ could have healed her, without coming to her, but Jesus arose and followed him. "And behold a woman (at the 20th verse) which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment; Jesus

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turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that same hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels, and the people making a noise; he said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn." He did a miracle in the way, as a pledge unto them that he would do this miracle also, that he would raise up his daughter; and by this miracle that he did in the way, he did give them a seal of the miracle following, of the mercy following. Thus he does many times.

Thus he dealt by David: the Lord made David a promise of the kingdom, to give him the kingdom, bring him to the throne: David, he is thrust out into the wilderness; well, when he is there, Saul he persecutes him, hunts him; Saul comes so near him, as that Saul is on one side the hill, and he on the other, nearer: but even there Saul is delivered into the hand of David. This now, this mercy here in the wilderness, was a pledge to him of the kingdom afterward. So now is it with you: hath the Lord given you a promise of some great blessing, or some great mercy; and thereupon does the sentence of death come upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it? In the interim, between the promise and the fulfilling, does the Lord deliver you from some affliction that rises up in your way: the interim-mercy, the deliverance being of the same nature with the mercy promised, is a pledge unto you that the mercy shall rise again; though the sentence of death be now upon it. And thus you should look upon things.

But while I am upon this, it is enough for the reliance of the soul upon God, a *may be* of mercy: I say, a *may be* of mercy is enough for the act of reliance. And this doctrine always holds forth this truth unto you, that there is a *may be;* because, when God intends to fulfil his promise, by giving any special blessing, or mercy to the children of Abraham, he does first of all put the sentence of death upon the blessing, and upon all the means that lead unto it. Shall we not then wait upon him; keep silence in the day of trouble?

I will give you two or three encouragements hereunto, and so I will wind up all.

Beloved, the sentence of death (you say) is upon the mercy

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or the blessing that you do much desire. If ever the mercy rise, and the grave clothes be taken off; it shall be the choicest mercy that ever you had in all your lives. Abraham had divers sons, but the jewel was Isaac, the dead mercy: Hannah had divers children, but who like Samuel, the found mercy? Mercy once *lost* and then *found* is a choice mercy, it is the greatest mercy. First I say, if ever you come to find the mercy you have lost; if ever that rise which the sentence of death is put upon, it shall be the greatest mercy. Job had a good estate; but when all was plundered, a sentence of death come upon all: when he came to his comforts and his estate again, then it was done. Some have observed concerning Joseph, that according to the several links of his affliction were the pearls in the crown of his mercy. There is observed some eight or nine. I shall not have time to enlarge myself in them, only thus: Joseph he is sold by his brethren into Egypt; answerable unto that, Joseph's brethren come down to Egypt, and worship before him. Joseph is accused for wronging his mistress, sad reproaches cast upon him; answerable to that, a herald proclaims before him, This is the man whom the king honours. Joseph is thrown into prison, the irons enter into his soul; answerable to that, a chain of gold is hung about his neck. Joseph, a poor stranger, brought as low as ever man was; answerable to that, he is made next in the kingdom to Pharaoh. Beloved, if the dead mercy rise, as your bodies when they rise they rise in glory, so when the mercy rises, it will rise a glorious mercy. And as it shall be the greatest mercy that ever you had, so it shall be the surest. That is most certain that is certain after uncertainty. Whose assurance was like to Thomas's? Oh, says Thomas, my Lord and my God; two my's, My Lord and my God: it came out of doubting. A tree that stands after shaking stands the most firmly. Assurance after doubting is the strongest assurance, surest assurance, as it is the greatest mercy. So, I say, it shall be the surest mercy, if ever the mercy rise.

And then again, lastly: as the surest, so it shall be the sweetest mercy; the children of Israel, they had wholesome meat and water, and drink: but the sweetest water was that, which they had after no water: water out of a rock, that was like honey: and a mercy that comes out of a rock, that comes

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from out of the sentence of death, from under death; it shall be the sweetest mercy. You know what the father of the prodigal says, when his son was come home: he calls his friends together: "Come, (says he) and make merry with me; for this my son was dead, and is now alive," Luke xv. 32: calls his friends together, and speaks thus unto them. So shall it be with the soul, when the mercy lost, is found, when the mercy dead is raised: then the soul shall call in his friends; Come, O my friends; come, I will tell you what the Lord hath done for my soul, here, here is a mercy dead, and it is now alive: come, make merry with me, O my friends; this my assurance it was even dead, and it is now alive: oh, this blessing, this blessing it was dead; but it is now alive: come and make merry with me, O my friends: for this mercy was dead, and it is now alive. Thus I say: if this mercy rise that hath the sentence of death upon it: it shall be the greatest mercy, it shall be the surest; and it shall be the sweetest mercy, that ever you had in all your days. And therefore, who would not wait upon the Lord? Who would not wait upon the Lord when the sentence of death is put upon the mercy, and upon all the means that do lead unto it? O my beloved in the Lord, that you would but possess your hearts with this one truth, this mercy; how quiet would your souls be under all the distempers and the troubles of the time; national distempers, personal distempers. When you look upon the troubles that are abroad, yet your hearts would be quiet, and you would say, Well, but yet notwithstanding, we may be in the way to the greatest mercy that ever England saw; why should we be thus discouraged? O my soul, wait upon God, this is God's way; he never gives any great mercy to any of his people, but first he does put a sentence of death upon it, and upon all the means that do lead unto it. And therefore, notwithstanding all, yet we may be in God's way. Therefore, O my soul, wait on him.

Thus much for this time.

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SERMON II.

THE SPIRITUAL ACTINGS OF FAITH THROUGH NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITIES.

"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb."—Rom. iv. 19.

THE words, as ye heard the last day, are spoken concerning Abraham; and they hold forth three great truths unto us.

The first is this: That when God intends to fulfil his promise, by giving any special blessing to the children of Abraham, he does first put the sentence of death upon the blessing, and upon all the means that do lead unto it. Abraham's body is dead, and Sarah's womb is dead, when God had promised him a great seed.

The second is this: When God is thus pleased to put the sentence of death upon a blessing, or the means that do lead thereto; then, and then especially, it is the duty and commendation of all the children of Abraham to believe in God, and not to stand poring upon the means, and the deadness thereof. "He considered not his own body being dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb."

The third is this: That no difficulty can stand before faith; true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ. Thus it was here with Abraham; he being not weak in faith, he had an eye unto Jesus Christ.

I have done with the first, and my desire is now at this time to despatch the second.

When God is pleased thus to put the sentence of death upon a blessing, or the means that do lead unto it; it is the duty of the children of Abraham then to trust in God, not to stand poring upon or considering of the means, and the deadness thereof.

Thus it was here with Abraham. God made Abraham a promise that his seed should be like the sand, and like the stars, for multitude: but Abraham's body is dead, and his wife's body is dead; notwithstanding, Abraham considered

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not the deadness of the means. And in all this he is held forth for our example, as you heard the last day. As he did therefore, so must we do.

The doctrine is somewhat large; I shall break it asunder into three parts, and endeavour to clear up these three propositions unto you, for the proof of the whole.

First, That a mere rational considering of the means, and the deadness thereof, is a great and a special enemy to the work of believing.

Secondly, That when all means fail, it is the duty and commendation of the children of Abraham then to believe.

Thirdly, That so to do is exceeding pleasing to God, and most acceptable.

First, That a mere rational considering of the means, the straitness or scantiness, narrowness or deadness of the means, is a great and a special enemy to the work of believing.

Abraham being not weak in faith, considered not his own body being dead. If he had considered, he might have been hindered in his faith.

Ye read of Zacharias, that good man, father of John the Baptist, that when the angel brought him tidings of a child, in way of his special mercy, he would not believe it. And in the ist of Luke, and the 30th verse, ye read how he was punished for it: "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words." But what hindered him, what kept him off from this work of believing? You shall find at the 18th verse; too much attendance unto, and considering of the means, and the deadness thereof. Zacharias said unto the angel, "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." He looked too much upon, and considered; he stood poring too much upon the means; and this was the enemy unto his faith. You know, beloved, that the Scripture hath laid a flat opposition between faith and sense. We live by faith, says the apostle, and not by sight or by sense. The reasons drawn from sense are sense; and when a man does live by reasons drawn from sense, and bears up his mind therewithal, he does live by sense. If you live by faith you do not live by sense; if you do live by sense you do not live by faith. They are

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as two buckets, the life of faith and the life of sense; when one goes up the other goes down: the higher faith riseth the lower sense and reason; and the higher sense and reason the lower faith. That is true of the schools, reason going before faith, weakens and diminisheth it; but reason following upon faith, increases and strengthens it. Besides, you know Paul says, "Not many wise," &c. Why not many wise called? Those that are wise, they consider the things of God, and of the gospel, in a mere rational way; and therefore not many wise are called: it hinders them from the work of believing. Luther says well, If you would believe, says he, you must crucify that question, why? God will not have us so full of wherefores. And if you would believe, you must go blindfold into God's command. Abraham subscribes to a blank, when the Lord called him out of his own country.

Besides, you know the great field that faith hath to work in; the large and vast orb and sphere that it hath to move in.

Faith can go into the Old Testament, and run as high as Adam, and come back again to the soul, and and tell the soul; I have seen a man whom God hath pardoned that damned all the world; and why may he not pardon thee? Faith can run up to heaven, and come home again to the soul; and say, I have seen the glory there; be of good comfort, there is enough in heaven to pay for all. Faith can ruu unto God's all-sufficiency, to God's omnipotency, and having viewed that well, it returns to the soul home again, and says, Be quiet, there is enough in God alone: and faith having placed and seated itself upon this high tower and mountain, God's omnipotency and all-sufficiency, it hath a great prospect, it can look over all the world, and look into another world too. But now reason, it gets upon some little mole hill of creature ability, and if it can see over two or three hedges, it is well. And therefore, oh, what a pain is it to faith to be tied to reason. I suppose you will all say, that if a man were able to go a journey of two or three hundred miles a foot, he were a very good footman; yet if you will tie him to carry a child of four or five years old with him, you will say, it would be a great luggage to him; and the man would say, pray let this child be left at home; for though he may run along in my hand half a mile, or go a mile with me, yet, notwithstanding, I must carry him the rest of the

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way: and when I come at any great water, or to go over any hill, I must take him upon my back; and that will be a great burden to me. And thus it is between faith and reason. Reason at the best is but a child to faith. Faith can foot it over mountains and difficulties, and wade through afflictions, though they be very wide: but when reason comes to any affliction, to wade through that, and to go over some great difficulties; then it cries out and says, Oh, faith, good faith, go back again; good faith, go back again. No, says faith, but I will take thee upon my back, reason. And so faith is fain to do indeed: take reason upon its back; but oh, what a luggage is reason to faith; oh, what a burden is reason to faith. Faith never works better, than when it works most alone. The mere rational considering of the means, and the deadness thereof, is a great and special enemy to the work of believing. That is the first.

The second proposition is this, That when all means fail, and seem to lie dead before us; then it is the duty and commendation of all the children of Abraham to believe: that is, to believe the thing may be, and so to rest and rely on God in Christ. Thus it was here with Abraham.

And hath not the Lord commanded by the apostle, saying, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to the hand of God, as into the hand of a faithful Creator," 1 Pet. iv. 19. When ye are scrupled about your election or reprobation, you look upon God as a potter that hath power over the clay, to make it either a vessel of honour or dishonour: but when you are to believe, then you are not to look upon God as a potter, that works out of clay or out of materials; but as a Creator, that works out of nothing, yea, as a faithful Creator, that will be sure to work out of nothing, whom you shall be sure of. Thus then you are to look upon him. You know the place in Hab. iii. 17: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation: the Lord God is my strength," &c. Thus Habakkuk believed. Beloved, we are so to believe, as the promise runs. God's promise is the rule of our faith;

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look how that speaks, so may we believe. The promise and faith is the buckle and clasp fit for one another. Now the Lord does not only promise to help the children of Abraham, but he promises to help when all means fail: "When the poor and needy seek for water, and there is none," Isa. xli. 17. I pray look into Jer. iii. 8, "Behold, (says the Lord,) I will bring them from the north country, (his people scattered here into the land of the north,) and gather them from the coasts of the earth; and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together; a great company shall return hither." The Lord promises to bring them back to their own country from the land of the north.

Aye, but may some say, I am a poor blind man, and I shall never find the way home again.

Says he, "I will gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind."

Oh, but I am a poor lame man, and I shall never be able to go so far,

"And with them (says he) the blind and the lame."

Oh, but I am a woman with child, surely I shall never be able to return to my own country.

Yes, says he, "the woman with child."

Aye, but I am a woman like to be in travail about that time, surely I shall be left behind; I shall never return to my own country.

Mark, "the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child, and a company shall return." God does not only promise help, but he promises to help the children of Abraham when all means fail.

And if you look into the New Testament, you will find that several promises which are given out in the Old Testament, upon special and extraordinary occasions, assuring nelp beyond means, are brought down into the New Testament for us to apply there. When the devil came to tempt our Lord and Saviour to turn stones into bread, says our Saviour, "Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," Matt. iv. 4. Now if you look into Deut. viii. 3, you will find that those words were spoken upon an extraordinary occasion; help beyond means: "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger,

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and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know: that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."

And so here in this Rom. iv. Abraham believed when all means failed; he believed the promise, and he is brought down for our example, that we should believe the promise also when means fail. And if you look into and consider Heb. xi., where you have a catalogue of many believers, ye shall find, that many of them believed when the means failed, beyond means; and yet they are all brought down and made mention of for our example.

Surely, therefore, it is the duty of the children of Abraham to believe when all means fail, and seem to be dead before us: means for the soul, means for the body, means for the family, means for the churches.

Take this for the reason: Such a faith is to be exercised unto God, as is suitable unto that God in whom we do believe. If the God in whom we do believe, were a God that did help only by means, then we were to trust so unto him; but being as he is such a God as works beyond means, we are to exercise a faith towards him suitable to this God in whom we do believe. So in regard of our love; we must love God with a love worthy of God. Now if a man should only love God for benefits and blessings that he receives from him, and not for the holiness and excellency that is in God himself; this love were not worthy of God. So in regard of our faith: if we should only believe God in regard of the reason, and experiences, and means; this faith were no way worthy of God. I will believe a man, I will believe the worst of men, the vilest of men, so far as I can see him; and shall I believe God no further? We must believe with a faith worthy of God; faith is not worthy of God, unless we believe beyond means: this is the faith that is worthy of God, this is the faith required and commended. Take but one scripture for it more. In Luke xvii. there were ten lepers came unto Christ desiring cure, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." At verse 13, "When he saw them, he said to them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass as they went they were cleansed." It seems they were not cleansed then as he spake; they were not

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cleansed when Christ says, "Go and shew yourselves to the priests;" for it is said, "As they went they were cleansed." Why then should they shew themselves to the priests? They were to shew themselves to the priests, to bring an offering for their cleansing; yet, says our Saviour, "Go shew yourselves to the priests." They were to believe that they should be cleansed, although they saw themselves full of leprosy.

So, although a soul sees himself to be full of leprosy, yet notwithstanding it is to rely upon Jesus Christ, and to believe as if he were fully cleansed. This is the second proposition.

The third will make out this the more full: Thus to believe when all means fail, is exceeding pleasing to God and most acceptable.

This kind of faith Christ commends in Thomas: Thomas (says Christ) "thou hast believed because thou hast seen; but blessed are those that do believe and have not seen." John xx. 29. Blessed is any man that does believe, though his hands may be full of sense: but of all believers, blessed is that believer that believes beyond sense, that believes and hath not seen.

There are two especially that Jesus Christ does commend for believing: the Canaanitish woman, and the Centurion. To the one, says he, "O woman, great is thy faith." Mat. xv. 28. And to the other: "I have not seen such faith, no, not in Israel." Mat. viii. 10. And both of these believed above hope and under hope, when the means in view seemed to chide them off from believing. In Heb. xi. many of the saints are commended for their faith. They had other graces wherein they did excel: Moses was a *meek* man, he is not recorded there and commended for his meekness, but for his *faith*. Samson was a stout and a resolute man; he is not commended there for that, but for his faith. They had other excellent graces, but this grace of faith is singled out to wear the crown. "They all obtained a good report through faith." Heb. xi. 39. That wears the crown of all other graces. And you shall find that that faith was mingled with many weaknesses: Rahab, one of those believers, what a deal of weakness passed from her in her believing. Yet notwithstanding, though their faith was clogged with many weaknesses, yet their faith is commended, and most of them

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believing beyond means, and when all means failed; plainly speaking out this truth to us: the great acceptation that such a faith hath with God. Beloved, this faith, believing when all means fail and lie dead before us, turns God about; (as we may speak with reverence) and makes God, of an enemy, a seeming enemy, to become our friend. If you trust unto your friend for a kindness, he will do it because you rest on him; if you rest upon an enemy, he fails you. But if you rest on God, he will therefore do it because you rest on him, and he will become your friend by your resting on him. Oh, I have been a great and a wretched sinner, yet notwithstanding, I know there is infinite riches of grace in Christ, and therefore, says the soul, I will rest on him: "yea Lord, though thou kill me, yet will I rest upon thee." Aye, (says the Lord) wilt thou now rest upon me, now I frown, now I chide, now I have a rod in my hand, now I have a sword in my hand to kill thee (as it were) wilt thou now rest upon me? Well, be of good comfort, thou art mine for ever. Man or woman, go in peace, good is thy faith. This resting thus upon God when all means fail, it melts God's anger into love.

And besides, it is that faith that is most successful, the most speeding in prayer. You may look into the second of Chronicles, the thirteenth chapter, and you shall find there that Abijah going to war with Jeroboam, had not more than half so many as Jeroboam had. Abijah "set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men." A great army. But Jeroboam had as many again. "And Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour." I pray now let us consider, how went the day? Read the seventeenth verse: "Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men." Five hundred thousand chosen men slain. How came this about? Read the eighteenth verse: "Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers." Or as some books have it, "because they stayed upon the Lord God of their fathers." The means was too scanty, it was short; they rested upon God beyond

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the means, and see what great success they had upon this: they were but four hundred thousand, against eight hundred thousand; and they slew five hundred thousand men. So successful is this work and this way of believing.

It is this faith that now I am speaking of; believing when all means fail and lie dead before us, that does honor God especially, which doth justify the soul; "It is the soul-saving faith of all." Pray look into the seventh of Luke, and consider it well. It is said at the last verse: "Jesus said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." But here is no mention at all before of her faith. There is mention of her love in the forty-seventh verse: "I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." There is mention before of her tears, at the thirty-eighth verse: "A woman in the city, which was a sinner, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Here is mention of her tears, here is mention of her liberality, and bounty, and love to Jesus Christ; and yet our Lord and Saviour Christ does not say thus: Woman, thy tears hath saved thee, go in peace: Woman, thy repentance and thy humiliation hath saved thee, go in peace: he doth not say, Thy love to me and thy bounty to me hath saved thee, go in peace, woman. No, but our Lord and Saviour, he saw a secret work of reliance upon himself in this woman, for she was a great sinner, and he says unto her, Woman, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace. This is the soul-saving faith, thus to believe when all means fail and seem to lie dead before you. Surely therefore, to do thus must needs be exceeding pleasing to God, and most acceptable.

And so I have done with those three propositions; and now I come to the application.

If these things be so, oh, what manner of faith should we have? Will ye only believe when means are strong and have life in them? Ye have read of the unbelief of the people of Israel when they were in the wilderness: being in the wilderness, they wanted much outward provision, ordinary provision; and by occasion thereof they murmured, full of unbelief, in so much as the Lord was angry with them,

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and slew them, so that they never came into the land of promise. But, I pray, what was their unbelief for which God did slay them: was it this, that they did not believe when they had means? No, but that they did not believe when all means failed, when all outward means failed; that is their unbelief.

Beloved, we have their promises, we have their example, we have more means of faith than they; and shall not our faith rise higher than theirs; shall not we believe an inch beyond the means? You have heard the doctrine: It is the duty of all the children of Abraham to believe when means fail, it is exceeding pleasing to God, and it is most acceptable. Oh, what an encouragement is here to believe above hope, and under hope, and when death sits upon the lips of the second cause, and speaks nothing but terror. Some there are, that say, they can believe for their bodies, but they cannot trust God for their souls, when means fail. Some say, they can trust God for their souls, when means fail, but they cannot trust God for their bodies. Some say, they can trust God for themselves, but they cannot trust God for their families: What shall become of my wife and children? Some say, they can trust God for their families, but they cannot trust God for the church; when a storm rises, they cry out and say, Lord, carest thou not that we perish? though Jesus Christ be in the ship with them.

We are very ready and apt to hunt after the means when we want them; and to rest upon them when we have them. And there is a great propenseness in us to doing rather than unto believing, before conversion; and in the point of conversion.

Before conversion, says the young man, Matt. xix. 16, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And in the point of conversion, Acts ii., "What shall we do to be saved?" And Paul himself, Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The jailor too, Acts xvi. 30, "What shall I do to be saved?" What shall I do? But I pray mark the apostle's answer to the jailor, when he cried out, and said, Oh, what shall I do? The apostle does not say, Go, fast and pray; though he had need do that: but the first work that the apostle does put him upon, is, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." This is the work.

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And therefore, when some came to Christ, and asked him this question, "Master, what shall we do that we may work the works of God?" says Christ, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent," John vi. 28, 29. And of all workings of faith, this same believing, when all means do fail and seem to lie dead before us, is that which is most pleasing to God. Oh, that we could learn, oh, that we could learn this point, to believe when the sentence of death is past upon a business, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

You will say, I am afraid to believe when means fail, for God hath commanded us to use means: and as in angling for fish, a man is to have his eye upon the cork, so he is to have his eye upon the means; God hath commanded us to use the means.

True, in your fishing and angling you have an eye unto the cork, but in Christ's fishing there is another cork that you are to have an eye unto: Christ commands to believe. "Master (say they), we have fished all night, and caught nothing; nevertheless at thy command we will cast in again," Luke v. 5. The same God that hath commanded you to keep the ten commandments, commands you to believe when all means fail.

And whereas ye say, ye are afraid to believe when you have no means, because God hath commanded you to use the means, and now means are wanting.

I shall desire you to consider with me but these four things.

First of all, thou sayest means fail, and seem to lie dead before thee, and thou art afraid now to believe; but it may be, that this is the time that God does take away the means, on purpose to try thy faith.

Beloved, there is a time when God does purposely take away the means to try a man's faith. God does first try our faith before he does feed our sense. When our Lord and Saviour Christ was to work that great miracle, feeding so many thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes; we read in John vi. 5, thus: "Jesus lift up his eyes, and saw a great company, and said to Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Why did our Saviour Christ thus put Philip upon it? Read what follows: "And this he said to prove him." He took away the means, "and this he

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said to prove him." There is a time when the Lord does sometimes take away the means on purpose to prove thy faith. How dost thou know, man or woman, whether this be not the day and the time? Thou sayest, thou canst not believe, because means fail; it may be it is the time of thy trial, God sending this time of purpose to try thee.

Again, secondly, consider this; God does never give to supply our lusts, but to supply our wants. Possibly there may be means to supply thy want, though not means to supply thy lust. When our Lord and Saviour Christ fed so many thousands, what did he feed them with? "Five barley loaves and two fishes," John vi. 9. Not with turkey, not with partridges, not with quails, not with chickens, but with barley loaves. It may be thou hast a barley-loaf-means, but thou hast not chicken-means; and because thou hast not means to supply thine appetite, and to supply thy lust, thou sayest thou hast no means, and all means fail. Oh, this is very ordinary among some people; because they have not means to satisfy their mind and their lust, therefore they say that all means fail. I beseech you, beloved, consider whether there be not this great mistake, when you say that all means fail; only a failing of means to supply your appetite and your lust, but not a failing of barley-loaf-means; whether there be not always that means left by God?

In the third place. But suppose that all means fail indeed, and lie dead before you: now faith is a means to a means: mark, now faith is a means to faith, faith hath a commission from God to put life into that means that lies dead before you; faith hath a power from God to make that a means which was none before. Poor soul, thou standest quaking and shaking at a distance, and sayest, Oh, there is no means but contrary means; come up to that contrary means, come up to it in a way of believing, and thy very coming up to that which thou lookest upon as contrary, through thy faith will be made a means to thee. When the apostle Peter was in prison, the angel comes to him, strikes off his chains, and bids him go out presently. Peter does not say thus, What should I stir for, Lord? Sir, there is an iron gate to go through, there are so many guards of soldiers to pass through. Peter does not say so, but rises in a way of believing, comes to the iron gate in faith, and when he comes at it the iron

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gate doth open. And so it will be with you. Indeed, if you come unto that which seems a contrary means, in a natural way, the iron gate still continues shut; but oh, if you would use your faith, come up unto that which you look upon as the most contrary in the way of believing, faith hath such a power from God, to put life into that means that lies dead before you.

And in the fourth place, consider this for your further encouragement: that look what way God is used to walk in towards you, the same way you may boldly expect him in. Does the Lord use to walk towards thee in a way of preventing mercy? You may boldly expect him in that way. Does the Lord walk towards you in an extraordinary way? (as in these times he hath toward us, though an unworthy people:) I say, does the Lord wald towards you in an extraordinary way? Hath he done so heretofore? You may expect him in that way. Now I appeal to you, you that are the people of God; hath not the Lord walked towards your souls in an extraordinary way? Hath not the Lord said concerning Christ, "His name shall be called Wonderful?" Isa. ix. 6. As you are known by your name, Richard, or Thomas, or John, so Jesus Christ shall be known by this name among his people, Wonderful: working wonders.

Hath not the Lord said, "His name is in the deep?" Ps. lxxvii. 19. Beloved, the Lord's way is in the deep towards his people and towards the wicked: towards his people, his way is in the deep when he walks towards them. Behold, saith he, by the prophet Jeremiah, speaking concerning the times of the gospel, "a new thing will I work, I will do a new thing, a woman shall compass a man;" you read it, Jer. xxxi. 22; but as Calvin reads it, "A woman shall lay siege to a man." That is the weaker shall take the stronger. And, says the Lord, never tell me it is a new thing, and such a thing as was never done before, I will never stand upon that, I will do things never done before, I will do a new thing, says the Lord, I will lead you in a way that was never went, never trodden before; I will do a new thing. And when the Lord walks in an extraordinary way towards you, now his way is in the deep. "His way is in the whirlwind" says the prophet, Nah. i. 3. Oh, beloved, shall we tie God to means then? True, God hath commanded you to use the

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means when you have them: but where hath God forbidden you to trust in him when you have no means? Thus Abraham did; he considered not his own body being dead, nor Sarah's womb being dead; for this his faith is commended; so shall you be. Oh, that our faith were right: oh, that we could learn to live by faith, at a higher rate than ever yet we have done. Time yet may come, for aught we know, that you may find more use of this point.

But you will say unto me, I am afraid I shall presume: trust in God when all means fail, means for my soul, and means for my body, and means for my family; trust in God now. I am afraid I shall presume: presumption is a great sin.

Mark. I shall only tell you what it is to presume, in answer to this; *præsumo*, is to take a thing before it is given, or offered: mercy it is always offered to a poor sinner: Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and die for sinners; thou canst not take mercy before it is offered. For a man to think that he shall fly in the air with wings like a bird, this is to presume: for a man to put God upon provision for his lust this is to presume: for a man to put God upon extraordinary, where ordinary may be this is to presume.

But for a man to rely upon God for necessities in extraordinary cases when ordinary cannot be had, this is no presumption, but faith. Mark, I say, to put God upon extraordinary, when ordinary may be had; this is presumption: but to rely upon God for necessities in an extraordinary case, when it cannot be had in ordinary; this is no presumption at all. Beloved, it is presumption in the highest degree for you and me, poor creatures, to tie up the hands of God; to labour to do it is dangerous.

As for example: one poor subject to go to his prince, and tie up his hands and feet, or to go to his palace, and nail up all his doors, and leave him but one little wicket to come out at; this is presumption. And so for a man to tie God to means, to tie God to a time, to tie God to this or that means, to tie God to means in general; this is presumption. Mark, some there are that tie God to a time: Oh, if mercy does not come by such a day, or such a time, I am undone for ever. Others they will not tie God to a time, but they will tie God to this or that particular means: Oh, if mercy come not in

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that way, or by that means, I am gone, I am lost for ever. Others, they will not tie God to time, nor to particular means, but they will tie God to means in general, they will not believe God a whit beyond means, and so tie God to means in general: ah, what is this but rank presumption, for a poor creature, to tie up the hands of his Creator? the sin that you seek, and think to avoid, you fall into: this is presumption.

And beloved, do you know how prejudicial this is to yourselves? As a dishonour to God, so great a hindrance to yourselves to do thus: it turns God out of the way of his mercy; Nay, says God, seeing you will have no mercy but in a road of means, you shall have none but in a road of means; so mercy comes thin, and scant, and by little drops; whereas otherwise mercy would come thick, and full and large.

Hereby you are put upon indirect means to get out of trouble; pray what is the ground that causes men to use indirect means to get out of trouble? is not this at the bottom? you think means must be used; this is at the bottom.

Beloved in the Lord, as you do desire God may not be dishonoured, that mercy may come full and not scant unto you, learn to believe at another rate than ever you have done; when all means fail and seem to lie dead before you, then believe: so for thy soul, so for thy body, so for thy estate.

You will say, how should I do this: to believe when all means fail and lie dead before me? I have a great prospect in my sins; the guilt of one sin comes, and that hath a blow at my conscience: and the guilt of another sin that comes and that gives a blow to my conscience, and my conscience is all black and blue with blows, and they all cry out and say, Poor, damned, damned and undone creature, and I see no way, no means at all left for my salvation; ah, Lord, what shall I do to believe now, when all means fail.

I shall only speak a word to it, and so wind up all, thus;

Know, that thou mayest trust God, that thou mayest find mercy, that thou mayest believe in such a case as this is. Beloved, therefore thou hast not believed in such a case heretofore, because thou didst think thou mightest not believe. But now know from the Lord, it is no temptation, it is no presumption, in such a case as this thou mayest lean thy poor guilty soul upon God this day. I am loth to make

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comparisons between one duty and another; but if there be any compares, this act of believing, when all means seem to lie dead before us, is more than all thy prayers and tears: thou cryest out and sayest, Oh, that I had tears in prayer, oh, that God would enlarge my heart in prayer, oh, that God would break this hard heart; and blessed be the Lord indeed when so it is.

But now, art thou in such a case? Hast thou a prospect of all thy sins, and all means seem to lie dead before thee; and doest thou now go unto Jesus Christ, saying to him, Ah Lord, I have been a great and a wretched sinner; yet now, hearing of thy free and rich grace, I do throw myself upon thee; Lord, if thou killest me, yet I will trust in thee; through thy grace, I will never return again unto folly; only Lord, I do lean my soul upon thee; as for comfort, Lord give me comfort when thou wilt; only, I lean my soul upon thee? I tell thee, this act of thy faith is more pleasing to God than thy twenty years' tears, than thy twenty years' prayers, if there be any compare.

But why then, my beloved, should you look at this as a matter of presumption, to trust upon God and upon Christ in this condition? Know it is your way unto Jesus Christ when all means fail. Oh, it is the only way for your deliverance; deliverance from your sins, and the fear of your sins. Carry this rule home along with you: deliverance is then nearest, when faith works highest; and faith then works highest, when all means are lowest. Do not stand poring then, christian; do not stand poring upon the deadness of the means, or the deadness of thine own heart. As the sight, beholding and gazing upon beauty, is a snare and a temptation to those that are given to wantonness; and the sight of much gold and silver and fine houses, a temptation to those that are given to worldliness: so the sight and beholding of the deadness of the means, is a great snare and temptation to those that are given to doubting, and those that are given to unbelief. Does the means, therefore, lie dead before thee at any time? Soul, man or woman, go to the Lord, and say thus: Ah, Lord, turn away mine eyes from beholding this same dead means. Away, away to the promise, when all means fail, now bear thyself at length upon the promise; go unto Jesus Christ, throw thyself now

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at his feet, and say, Lord, though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee; if I perish, I will perish here. Do this and live.

And thus I have done with the second proposition. And so much for this time.

SERMON II.

THE SPIRITUAL ACTINGS OF FAITH THROUGH NATURAL IMPOSSIBILITIES.

"And being not weak (or weakened) in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb."—Rom. iv. 19.

THE words are spoken of Abraham, and they hold forth three great truths, as ye have heard.

First, That when God intends any great mercy or blessing to the children of Abraham, he does first put the sentence of death upon the blessing or mercy, and upon all the means that do lead unto it.

Secondly, That then, and then especially, it is the duty of all the children of Abraham, of all believers, then for to trust in God.

Thirdly, That no difficulties can stand before faith: true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ.

I have done with the two former, and am now to speak unto the third:

No difficulties can stand before faith: true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ.

Abraham had a promise given him, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and that in his seed all nations of the world should be blessed. Upon this promise, Abraham's body is dead, and Sarah's body is dead; now Abraham believes. "Being not weak in faith, he considered not the deadness of his own body." And in this he had an eye

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unto Jesus Christ, for this was imputed to him for righteousness; and herein he is held forth as an example to us that believe with a justifying faith, in this chapter. So that wherever there is true, saving, justifying faith, it carries a man through all difficulties, through all natural discouragements.

For the clearing whereof, I shall deliver myself in these four things.

First, I will shew you, that the way to Jesus Christ is clogged with many difficulties and natural discouragements. This as a rice unto all the rest.

Secondly, That true, saving faith, will carry one through all these.

Thirdly, That nothing else can do it.

And fourthly, What it is in true, saving, justifying faith, that does it? how this faith comes to do it?

First: The way to Jesus Christ is clogged with many difficulties or natural discouragements. No sooner does a man begin to look after Christ, but difficulties and natural discouragements do arise; and they are prest by Satan with violence. When the children of Israel began to make out of Egypt, Pharoah doubles their task, and labours to make their way grievous and troublous. And so soon as a soul begins to look after Christ; Satan and the world labour to make his way troublous. The devil is the great hunter of souls. So long as the game goes well with the hunter and he is going into his snare, he makes no noise; but if once the hare or the game begin to decline the snare and to go another way, then he whoops and halloos and makes a noise, that he may scare it into the snare again. And so, as long as men are going into the devil's snare, he makes no noise; but if once they begin to turn aside from his snare, then he raises town and country, and a great noise is made to scare the soul in again; he knows that a candle may be easily blown into light when it is new put out. Paul met with no buffetings of Satan, till he had been taken up into the third heavens and seen the glory there. So long as Paul went on in his pharisaical way, he met with no opposition. And so long as a man goes on in the way of the world, or in some pharisaical devotional way that is not the way of the gospel, he meets with no opposition; but when once the Lord

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takes him (as it were) into the third heavens and shews him the glory of Christ, then Satan begins to buffet him. Nature within us, that stands and says, Will you go to Christ? it is impossible that ever you should get him. And the world without: Will you go to Christ? you will lose all your friends. Will you become a fool too? What with the world, and what with the flesh, and what with the devil, the way to Jesus Christ is clogged with many difficulties.

And this will appear yet further, if you consider the nature of faith and the worth of it. It is a grace, a gospel grace, a precious grace, whereby we do come to Christ. I say it is a grace; *Nulla virtus sine lapide.* When our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, they rolled a stone over his sepulchre, and when the disciples came, they said, "Who shall roll away the stone?" And as our Lord himself had a stone rolled upon him, so the more of Christ is in any virtue, the greater stone and the greater difficulty is rolled upon it; every virtue and every grace hath one stone or other that is rolled upon it; but the more of Christ in any thing, the more, the greater is the stone that is rolled upon it. Faith is an excellent grace. "The trial of your faith is more precious than gold," says the apostle. What is faith itself then? It is the intelligencer of the soul, the directrix or queen-regent of all the graces, it sits at the stern and guides the whole vessel. It is that grace that gives a *being* unto a christian, other graces the *well-being*. It is that grace that brings Christ and the soul together. It is that grace that covers the defects of all other graces. It is called the shield; a shield does not only cover the body, but the rest of the armour; faith does not only cover the soul, but the defects of all other graces. There is an excellency in grace: excellent things and jewels they are hard to come by. Therefore by it we come unto Christ. He that comes over the river must come from that side of the water if he will come to this. And he that comes to Christ, he must come from his old customs, and his own engagements, and his own righteousness; this is a hard thing. I may say in some respects it is harder to believe than to keep the ten commandments, because there is something in nature towards them. Christ is the way to heaven, and faith is the way to Christ (understand it rightly) faith is the way to Christ; now therefore

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it being so hard a work to believe, surely, the way to Jesus Christ must needs be laid with many difficulties and natural discouragements. But that is but the rice.

Secondly: Though the way to Jesus Christ be clogged with many difficulties; true, saving, justifying faith, will carry us through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ. It is that grace that is opposed to the sinful απιστια that the apostle speaks of. He being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, ου διεκριθη he staggered not; the word you translate staggering, in other places it is translated *doubting, nothing doubting;* but the same word is translated also *discerning*; "not discerning the Lord's body." 1 Cor. xi. 29. And so the word will fully bear that signification. When a man looks upon things with an eye of reason, he makes a discretion of dijudication of things: some things are *facile* easy, some things are hard. But when a man looks by faith upon the power of God, there is not that discretion there. All things are easy to the eye of faith that looks at the power of God. You shall observe therefore, that when our Lord and Saviour himself would bear up the hearts of his disciples over all discouragements, he directs them to this work of believing with a saving, justifying faith; you know the place: "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." John xiv. 1. An Hebraism, noting a similitude: "The Father works hitherto, and I work." That is, as the Father works so I work. So here, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." That is, as ye believe in God the Father, so believe also in me; ye believe that God the Father is able to provide for you; believe in me that I am able to satisfy for you. If you would not have your hearts troubled that I am now to leave you, at the many discouragements that you are to meet withal; it is not enough for you that you believe in God as God; but you must believe in me also as your Mediator, and rest upon me. True, saving, justifying faith is the only means to bear up your hearts through all this trouble. And if you look into Luke xvii., you shall find that when our Saviour Christ would teach his disciples how to do a hard work, he does point them unto this justifying faith. "And the Lord said," verse 6, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to

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this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey you." You will say this is a faith of miracles. You may be pleased therefore to observe, that our Saviour Christ uses this and the like expression upon three several occasions. Once upon occasion that his disciples could not cast out the devil out of some that were possessed. Once upon occasion that the fig-tree was dried up and withered. And once here upon occasion that the disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith;" when they thought it was so hard a thing to forgive a man so often as Christ required.

Our Saviour uses this and the like expression of removing a sycamore-tree and the mountains; upon occasion that the disciples could not cast out the devil. And of that you read in Mat. xvii. 20, and there, indeed, he speaks of the faith of miracles. "Why could not we cast him out?" verse 19. "Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Here he speaks of the faith of miracles, because thereby we should be able to cast out the devil; which plainly speaks a miracle.

He uses again this like expression upon an occasion of the drying up of the fig-tree. And concerning that, you read in Mark xi. 20: "As they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. Jesus answering, said unto them, have faith in God. And verily I say unto you, whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, &c." Here the faith called for is both faith of miracles and a justifying faith too. A faith of miracles, it is brought in upon occasion of this miracle, Christ says, If he have faith, he shall not only do this, but he shall remove mountains. But here is a justifying faith also intended, for he says, "Have faith in God," verse 22, so you read it. But in the margin of your bible it is, have faith *of* God; when as the scripture speaks of a justifying faith, it uses to speak in such an expression as this: so Paul says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God;"

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Gal. ii. 19, speaking of justifying faith, not by faith *in* the Son of God. So in Rev. xiv. it is called "the faith of Jesus:" and then it seems to run very largely, somewhat too largely, if it were only a miraculous faith, faith of miracles that were here intended. For I say unto you, whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, the faith of miracles and gifts only to some, unto another the gift of faith; not to all, says the apostle. And then here it is opposed to *doubting*, the same word that is used here in my text concerning Abraham, who believed and staggered not: says he here, "whosoever shall say to this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart"—or shall not stagger in his heart; it is the same word that is used there, the same opposition. So that I take it both are here intended; one primarily, the other secondarily.

But now in Luke xvii. there is another occasion that this expression is brought in by our Saviour Christ. He says unto his disciples, verse 3, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him; if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him: and the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith: and the Lord said, If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say unto this sycamore tree, &c." Here is no miracle here that these words are brought in upon: why should our Saviour put that upon a faith of miracles, in doing a work of christianity, the forgiving the brother so often thus? the faith that is to be exercised in prayer, and in forgiving our brother ordinarily, is not the faith of miracles: but the faith he here calls for, is a faith that is to be used in prayer, and in forgiving of our brethren: surely this is a saving faith, a justifying faith that is here intended. And as one says well, What is all the work of faith, but as the removing of mountains? When we take our sins, that stand up and hinder the light of God's grace from shining in our hearts, and remove them off from ourselves unto Jesus Christ, to his blood, that they are drowned as in the bottom of that red sea; what is this but to remove mountains? When we take our carnal reason, and our high thoughts, and bring them into obedience unto Jesus Christ; what is this but to remove mountains? When our great and manifold

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temptations are laid level, that the promise may come into the soul freely, what is this but to remove these mountains? Mountains rose up in the way of Zerubbabel when he was to build the temple. Zech. iv. 7. "Who art thou, O mountain?" Temptation and corruption are mountains; and the curse of the law, is a great mountain. Would you, therefore, now remove these mountains, walk over these natural impossibilities; there is no such way as to get a justifying and a saving faith, says our Saviour. What abundance of difficulties did Noah's faith carry him through. The Lord commanded Noah to build an ark: Noah, he might have said thus: Lord, thou hast now commanded me to build an ark; I was never brought up to that trade; I have been a preacher many years, but I never yet was a wheelwright, never yet a ship-carpenter: and, Lord, if I do go about to build an ark, the whole world will jeer me: What will this old man do; will he ride in a ship upon the dry ground? And when I have built the ark, Lord, how shall I do to get in all the creatures into the ark? And if the creatures do come, they will tear me in pieces; the lions and the bears, they will prey upon me. Yea, Lord, and if they do come into the ark and into the ship, the very stench of all the beasts will poison me. Yet, notwithstanding all these difficulties and all these discouragements, Noah prepared an ark. Why? For he believed, and he believed with a saving, justifying faith.

So if you look into the New Testament, that is full of this. What abundance of difficulties did the wise men go through that came to worship Jesus Christ? They were commanded to go worship him that was born King of the Jews. They might have said thus: What is the King of the Jews to us? We know no such king. Shall we go out of our own kingdom, and out of our own country to worship the King of the Jews; the despised people of the Jews? When they came at Jerusalem, the learned men, the priests, and those that were of that country, they knew none such: when they came at the place where Christ was born, they found him in a stable; and they might have said, Is this the King of the Jews: is this his palace? What, a stable for his palace! What, are these horses, are these his courtiers? Is this a king? It is impossible he should be a king. Yet, notwith-

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standing, they went. Why? Because they believed, and this their faith carried them through all.

What abundance of difficulties did Matthew's faith carry him through. The Lord commanded Mathew to follow him; Matthew, follow me, says Christ, Matt. ix. 9, and so he did. But he might have said thus: Whether shall I follow this man? I have a good calling, I have so many hundreds coming in by the year from the custom house; this man hath not whereon to lay his head: I shall be a beggar; all my friends will call me a fool. Notwithstanding Matthew leaves all and follows Christ. Why? He believed with a saving, justifying faith.

What abundance of difficulties did Zaccheus's faith carry him through. "Zaccheus (says our Lord to him), haste and come down, for I must abide with thee this day: he came down, he received him into his house;" and being there, he says, "Lord, behold the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if there be any one that I have wronged by false accusation, I restore unto him fourfold," Luke xix. 5—9. Mark, what a hard work he went through: "The half of my goods I give to the poor." Pray let us compute it a little. Suppose his estate was a thousand pounds. Lord, says he, the half of my goods I give to the poor: there is but five hundred left. Suppose he had wronged a man to the value of a hundred pounds; Lord, says he, I restore fourfold: then there is but one hundred left of a thousand. What a great matter was this. Yet this Zaccheus did. Why? "O Zaccheus (says Christ), this day is salvation come to thine house, for so much as thou also art the son of Abraham." He believed, as Abraham did, with a saving, justifying faith. So then, thus you see, that true, saving, justifying faith carries a man through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ.

But, in the third place, nothing else can do it: conviction of the good ways of God cannot do it. Saul was convinced that David was a righteous man: "Oh, my son David (says he), thou art more righteous than I," 1 Sam. xxiv. 17; and yet he persecuted him. Conviction, bare conviction will not do it.

Resolution will not do it neither. Resolution to turn to God and to become a new man or woman, that will not do

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it: bare resolution will not do it. Many resolve that will not do it. And therefore says our Saviour to Peter, "Peter, I have prayed that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 13. Satan hath desired to winnow thee; and, Peter, thou hast said, though all men forsake me, thou wilt not: thou hast taken up a great resolution, but, Peter, it is not resolution will do it, if any thing hold, it will be thy faith; and therefore, Peter, I have prayed that thy faith fail not. He does not say, I have prayed that thy resolution fail not; no: "Peter, I have prayed that thy faith fail not." You have read what Hazael resolved, when the prophet told him he should be a great persecutor, rip up women with child. Oh, says he, does my lord look upon me as a dog's head; and yet he did it. Resolution will not do it: resolution will not carry one through temptation and difficulties.

Again, moral virtues will not do it. The young man that came to Christ, he was a great moralist. When our Saviour told him he should keep the commandments that he might obtain eternal life; "Lord (says he), all these have I kept from my youth," Matt. ix. 20; and Christ looked upon him and loved him; he was a fine moralist, but notwithstanding, he did not follow Christ, he went away, and was very sorrowful. Bare moral virtues will not do it, for they are dead things. You see how it is with a man's shoe, though the leather be never so thick, yet by going upon the stones and the gravel, the leather wears thin, and wears out: but if a man goes barefoot, though the skin of his foot be thinner, the skin does not wear out, but grows thicker; as Indians, they go barefoot, and the skin of their feet wears thicker by going upon the gravel and upon the stones. What is the reason? The leather of a man's shoe is a dead thing, but the foot is a living thing. And so faith is a living thing, and will carry a man over gravel, and stones, and difficulties; but moral virtues, they are but dead things, and though they be never so thick, they will grow thin, and wear out, and come to nothing. Bare moral virtues will not do it.

And then, again, gifts and parts and gospel enlargements cannot do it, they leave black ashes upon the soul; they are a blaze, they make a great blaze. Straw that is burnt, makes a great blaze, but it leaves black ashes upon the hearth; so where these are, without saving faith, they may make a great

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blaze, but the end of them is black ashes upon the soul. Judas, ye know, he had great gifts and gospel parts; but that would not do it, would not carry him through all his temptations and difficulties to Jesus Christ. Pray do but compare Nicodemus and Judas: Nicodemus was but in his catechism of christianity when Judas was a preacher; Nicodemus comes to Christ by night, when Judas preaches Christ openly; but in the end, Nicodemus owns Christ when he is dead, and Judas betrays him when he is living. Nicodemus had a true, saving faith; Judas had only gifts, gospel gifts and gospel enlargements; that will not do it neither.

And then, again, the experience of God's former dealings, providential dealings and preservation, that will not do it. You know how it was with those spies that were sent into the land of Canaan; there were two sorts of spies; there were good spies and there were bad spies: the good spies brought up a good report of the land, and the evil spies brought up an evil report.

How? Why? Consider but a little. The good spies, they met with many troubles when they were sent out to spy out the land: fain to be hidden in Rahab's house: and then they fled to the mountains, and there they lay: they come home, and they say, The Lord hath delivered this people into our hands. The other spies, now, that brought up the evil report, they met with no such hard fare, that we read of; and yet they come home, and they say, The men of the country are the children of Anak, and the cities are walled up to heaven: they had experience of God's preservation in an especial manner, and yet, notwithstanding, that would not do it. Bare experience of God's preserving mercy, that will not do it; it is only faith will do it, saving, justifying faith will do it. "This is the victory whereby you overcome the world, your faith: by faith ye stand." 1 John v. 4; 2 Cor. i. 2, 3, 4. Look upon your dangers under a sea notion, and faith it is called your anchor. Look upon your dangers under a land notion, and faith, it is called your shield. Nothing but faith can do it.

Fourthly, you will say to me, What is it in this saving, justifying faith, that is able thus to carry the soul through all difficulties, and discouragements, and natural impossibilities to Jesus Christ? How does faith do it?

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Give me leave to stay here.

Faith shews the soul the glorious, invisible things of God and of his grace, and brings them near unto the soul. I was a hard thing for Moses to leave all the pleasures, and profits, and preferments of Egypt: he did it though, choosing rather the afflictions of Pharaoh with God's people. Why? Says Hebrews xi., "He saw him that is invisible." But how did he see him? By faith, says the text, "by faith he saw him that is invisible." Faith opens the eyes for to see that a man hath more with him than against him. And the works of God in Christ, are not seen by the world; God's pardoning mercy, not seen by the world; the union with Jesus Christ, and the privilege thereof, not seen by the world; the satisfaction of Jesus Christ for a poor sinner, not seen by the world; the great power of God not seen, or if so, yet at a distance, it does not much affect. "Faith is the substance of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1; it does not only shew a man things that are otherwise unseen, but brings them near; salvation near, pardoning mercy near, the privileges of union with Christ near, Christ's satisfaction near: and so when difficulties and discouragements do arise, says the soul, through faith, Why should not I be satisfied with any condition, seeing Christ hath satisfied for me? I am one with Christ. Christ is a common person. When Christ died, I died; when Christ rose, I rose; when Christ ascended, I ascended; Christ sitting in heaven, I sit there. Thus faith, it elevates and raises up the soul into heaven, it carries it over all difficulties and discouragements, that it can meet withal.

Again, true, saving faith; it tells the soul that all things are its own. "All things are yours (says the apostle) things present, and things to come, life and death; all things are yours," 1 Cor. iii. 22. Faith speaks the same language: all things are yours, soul, all things are yours: difficulties are yours, and natural impossibilities are yours; things present are yours, and things to come are yours. Will you be afraid of that which is your own? Will the owner be afraid of his own dog? A mastiff, he falls upon a stranger, and worries him, and a stranger is afraid of him; but the owner is not afraid, he leaps and fawns upon him, but he does not not worry him. Says faith, all these difficulties, and all these

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temptations, they are your own, they will not worry you; they may leap upon you, they may fawn upon you, but they will not worry you; they are all your own; part of the purchase that Jesus Christ hath made for you, all these are your own. Faith holds this steadily upon the soul, and so a man breaks through difficulties.

Again, true, saving, justifying faith, it shews a man greater excellencies in Christ than all difficulties, and natural discouragements can amount unto on the other side. You know how it is with a dog, the greyhound, if he sees the game a great way off, he gives it over: but when he comes near, he will rush through the very bushes for to take the hare, throw himself upon his back that he may take it, a natural hope makes him do it: faith it raises a mighty hope in the soul, presents the soul with many excellencies, and raises a mighty hope in the soul for the obtainment of them: it does spread more excellencies before the soul, than can be lost by the hand of difficulties: for example: If a man hath been a prodigal, and now is returning to Christ; the world says, friends say, if you take this course you will lose all; you will lose all your acquaintance, lose your liberty, lose your estate, may be, lose your life: be it so, says faith, though thou losest thy friends, thou shalt gain better: and though thou losest thy liberty, thou shalt gain better: and though thou losest thy life itself, thou shalt gain a better; it is but a while neither, says faith, that thou shalt lose these things and thou shalt have them better, in a better edition. When a man's eyes are open to behold the excellencies of Christ, then they are shut up to outward discouragements. When a man hath beheld the sun in its glory, his eyes dazzle to the things that are below: now faith opens a man's eyes to see the excellencies of Jesus Christ, and so the soul is carried through difficulties and discouragements, though they be never so many.

Again, true, saving faith, it enables the soul to leave the success and the event of all unto God himself. Nothing strengthens the hands of difficulties and discouragements so much, as solicitude about success and event of things: true saving faith helps a man to leave the success to Christ; it does commit the soul unto God, unto Christ; there is a mutual committing between Christ and a believer: Christ

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commits himself unto a believer, and a believer commits himself again unto Christ. Christ commits himself unto a believer: you know what is said in the gospel, "He did not commit himself unto them, because they did not believe him," John ii. 24., arguing, that he did commit himself unto others that did believe him. And believers commit themselves unto Jesus Christ. "Commit thy way unto the Lord," Ps. xxxvii. 5; there is a mutual way of committing: Christ, he does commit his grace; he does commit his Spirit; he does commit his truth unto a believer: a believer commits his estate, and his name, and himself again unto Christ: Christ commits his work unto a believer; and a believer commits the success of the work, again unto Jesus Christ. Faith now leaves the event, and the success again unto Jesus Christ; and therefore when difficulties and natural discouragements arise, and say, What wilt thou do now? What wilt thou do now to be preserved? What wilt thou do to continue now? What wilt thou do to be delivered now? What will become of you now? Oh, Satan, says a believer, thou hast mistaken the question; my question is not, What shall become of me? I have left the success of things to God: but my question is, What shall I do for God? My question is, How shall I love Jesus Christ? My question is, How shall I be like unto Jesus Christ? My question is, How shall I serve my generation, and own Jesus Christ in these times? This is my question. Faith, true, saving faith, it leaves the success and the event of things unto Christ, and so thereby the soul is carried through all difficulties and natural discouragements unto Jesus Christ.

True, saving faith, is that grace whereby the soul takes up the yoke of Christ, and the burden of Christ upon his soul. Christ's burden, does unburden all other burdens; the very taking of Christ's burden upon a man, does ease him of all other burdens. This may seem strange to you, that the taking of a new burden should ease one of the former: if a man be carrying coals or wood, the taking of a new burden would not ease him of the former; but the burden of Christ, beloved, is of another nature. Austin distinguishes them; there is a burden burdening, and a burden supporting: he expresses it thus; the feathers that a bird or a fowl is clothed with, they have a weight in them,

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the wings and feathers have a weight, a pound of feathers is as heavy as a pound of lead; there is a weight in those feathers, yet notwithstanding they bear up the burden of the body; there be a weight in them, one weight bears up another: or as it is with your coaches, the wheels are heavy; yet notwithstanding, being fastened unto the coach, unto the body of the coach, makes the body to go away the lighter, though they be heavy in themselves. So now it is here, the burden of Jesus Christ it makes all other burdens to go away the lighter. Faith, true, saving faith, it is the grace that takes up the burden of Christ upon the soul, and so thereby all other burdens are made the lighter, and difficulties and discouragements overcome.

True, saving faith, it does teach a man for to pick out the love of God, from under the anger of God. God never makes his pills so bitter, but he mingles some sugar withal: and true faith can find it out. When as our Lord and Saviour Christ said, "Woman what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come," John ii. 4, 5: the next words that she says is, to the servants, "Whatsoever he bids you do, that do." They wanted wine, she came to him for wine, and he answered her so: it may seem an hard answer, yet says she to the servants, "Whatsoever he bid you do, that do." For our Saviour had said, "My hour is not yet come:" implying therefore, that he would do it. Implication is enough for faith, for Mary's faith. Faith, it acquaints a man with the ways of God, and acquaints a soul what God's ways are: it tells the soul that when Christ seems to be the greatest enemy, he intends the greatest friendship. He, says faith, does then intend for to raise us up, when he seems most for to cast us down: whereupon, when difficulties and discouragements do arise, is this his way indeed? says a believing soul, why then shall I be borne down with so many discouragements, though they be never so many?

True, saving, justifying faith, fills the soul with God's infinity or infiniteness. God's way is not as your way, says faith, nor his thoughts as your thoughts; but as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts beyond yours, and his ways beyond yours. Faith lodges this principle into the soul, that God is infinite; and having laid that principle there, when difficulties and discouragements do arise, saying,

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you see now into what distress you are brought, now you see there is no hope at all for your deliverance; true indeed, says the believer, through the strength of faith, I see there is no way in any one reason, but God is infinite: I see many difficulties, but God is infinite. The soul by faith being filled with the apprehension of God's infiniteness, hereby is carried through all difficulties and discouragements to Jesus Christ.

I have not time, I see, to tell you how faith works by love, which much water cannot quench, stronger than death. And how faith is strengthened with the strength of the power of God, that it lays hold upon. As the ivy is strong, by the strength of the oak that it grasps upon; so faith is strong, by the strength of that God that it grasps upon.

But the thing is sufficiently proved: No difficulties can stand before saving faith: true, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ.

I come to the application:

If these things be so, then if difficulties and natural discouragements do arise, (who is there among you but meet with some or other in your several places?) see here the way how for to grapple with them; strengthen your faith, exercise your faith. Resolution; you are mistaken, resolution will not do it. Christian, here is thy strength. Conviction will not do it, moral virtue will not do it, exangelical gifts and parts and enlargements will not do it; experience of God's preservation of you will not do it. Christian, here is thy strength. But oh, let not your strength be cut off in the lap of any Dalilah. True, justifying faith, is your strength, that is your shield. The heathen could say, when he was sore wounded, Is my shield whole? if that be well, all is well. So say I, if your shield be well, if your faith be well, if your true, justifying, saving faith, be well, then all is well. Thus you shall be able to look difficulties and discouragements in the face, though they be never so great.

You will say unto me, Suppose a man hath newly begun to look unto Jesus Christ, and now difficulties and natural discouragements do arise; how shall he be able so to raise and to use his faith, as he may be able to break through all unto Jesus Christ?

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Take heed that you do not stand poring too much upon them. Abraham considered not the deadness of his own body, Sarah's body. But if you will behold them,

Exercise your faith in the promise, before you do speak with those difficulties. Some there are that stand poring so much upon difficulties and natural discouragements, that they have spent the strength of their spirits; so that when the promise comes, they have no strength at all in their spirits to entertain the promise with. If the rope or cable be never so strong that is thrown out into the water, if a man be drowned before the rope or cable come at him, what matter is it though the cable be never so great? Some there are that stand poring so much upon natural discouragements, that their hearts are even sunk and drowned before the promise comes; and how can the promise help you then? Therefore say, Come first promise, come first promise.

And then again, if you will behold these, look upon them as they are, your trial and many times the devil's engines to work your hearts off again: I say your trials, and the devil's engines to work your hearts back again. When you were in your natural condition, then your heart was quiet, your conscience quiet, and the devil quiet, and your friends quiet, and did not speak evil of you: now you begin to look towards Christ, now conscience condemns, now the devil accuses, now your friends, your former friends, they speak evil of you. I appeal to thee, man or woman, in thine own soul, dost thou not think that thy former condition was an ungodly condition? Yes. And then quiet? Then conscience quiet, then friends quiet, then Satan quiet: and now conscience accuses, and now Satan accuses, and now friends speak evil. Oh, therefore say, surely this is nothing but a temptation; and believe it, beloved, it is half a victory over a temptation, to know that a temptation is but a temptation.

Now, now especially, set thyself with all thy might to venture upon Jesus Christ. Labour much in venturing upon Jesus Christ now. Mark, faith is nothing else but the soul's venture; it ventures *to* Christ, it ventures *on* Christ, it ventures *for* Christ.

It ventures *to* Christ, in opposition to all legal terrors. It ventures *on* Christ, in opposition to all our own guiltiness. It ventures *for* Christ, in opposition to all difficulties and

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discouragements. The proper nature of faith is to venture; and what need we venture, if there were no difficulties? Difficulties properly call for venturing. Mark it: do difficulties arise? now set thyself to venture upon Jesus Christ.

If a man be to go home over some water, or river, and the water rises, he says with himself, How shall I get over this water? the longer I stay, the more it rises. He begins to go into it, and he comes back again. But, says he, there is no other way, as good first as at the last; I must venture, I must over, there is no other way: and so he ventures. So say I now unto thee. This thou must come unto at last, poor soul: difficulties and discouragements arise, to stave thee off from Christ; at the last thou must venture upon Jesus Christ; at the last you must venture, notwithstanding all your guilt: you begin to do it, and you are ready to go back; but know this, first or last you must venture upon Christ. Hadst thou not better do it at first? Oh, therefore, whenever any difficulties do arise, put thyself upon faith; say, Come, Oh my soul, here is a difficulty, now venture on Jesus Christ.

For your encouragement know this: That the more and greater difficulties your duties or your graces are recovered out of the hand of, the more comfortable they will be to you. I pray mark it. I say, duty or grace, recovered out of the hand of difficulty, is the most comfortable. You know how it was with David at Ziklag; the enemy had come upon him, taken away his wife and all his comforts: a sentence of death was upon all his comforts. David, he follows after, overtakes the enemy, recovers his wife and all his comforts, and there he had the greatest spoil of all spoils: he sent unto all his friends of his spoil, he never had a greater spoil. So I say, does difficulty or discouragement break in upon your duty, morning duty, evening duty? or any grace? follow after it. If thou strikest this difficulty in the hinder part, and recoverest thy duty or thy grace out of the hand of the difficulty, thy duty and thy grace will be more comfortable than ever it was.

Study Jesus Christ more, and labour for a clear and a distinct knowledge of Jesus Christ. Faith, in scripture phrase, it is called knowledge, the knowledge of Christ. "By his knowledge he shall justify many," Isa. liii. 11. To

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know and believe, they are put together; the more you know, the more clear and distinct knowledge you have of Christ, the stronger your faith; the less knowledge you have of Christ, the weaker your faith. A weak faith is apt to be blown down with every wind. "Abraham being not weak, he considered not his own body," so he staggered not. The weak fire, it may be put out with fuel, casting of much wood upon it: the strong fire, it increases and grows even by throwing on of water, that is contrary. A weak faith is borne down instantly. Art thou therefore weak, and hast newly begun to look towards Jesus Christ? Oh, labour to get stronger faith; and that you shall do, by growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Study Christ more; his life more, his death more, his fulness more, the merciful disposition of Jesus Christ more. Thus shall you be able to grow strong, and shall work through all difficulties and discouragements unto the Lord Christ.

Yet you will say to me, But suppose now that a man hath believed some time, a great while, been in Christ a great while, difficulties and discouragements do arise to beat a man out of the good ways of Christ that he hath taken up: how should a man so raise and use his faith, as he may be able to work through all those unto Jesus Christ?

I will speak but to this, and so I will wind up all.

Consider your call, often consider your call, your first call to a work; and put yourselves often unto this disjunction, Either God hath called me to this work, or else he hath not. If God hath not called me, what means this scripture, and what means that scripture, and what means the other scripture? And if God hath called me, why should I lay down the work for any difficulty; will not he carry me through? And know this, that difficulties do sometimes arise in our way, to make a stoppage in our proceedings; and sometimes they arise only to draw out our faith. When as thou seest thy call clear unto any work, then say, These difficulties arise only to draw out my faith, and not to make a stoppage in my proceedings.

Consider this, That the more you believe in the face of difficulty, the more you please God. Nothing so pleasing to God, as believing in the face of difficulty. God will trust him with much, that trusts much to God; God will break

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through many difficulties to save thy soul, if thou canst break through many difficulties to come to him. There is no grace does more honour God, than faith; of all graces it honours God most, and of all the pieces of faith, none do more honour God, than believing in the face of difficulties. When therefore any difficulty or natural discouragement does arise, say, The Lord pardon me; oh, I have dishonoured God enough already: is this the way for to honour God, to believe in the face of difficulties and natural discouragements? here now I have more opportunity to do it, the Lord help me, now will I set myself to believe.

Sometimes when you meet together, speak unto one another of the great things that God hath done, the great things that God hath promised, the great things that faith hath done. As words of anger do draw out anger, so experiences do draw out faith. Only I pray take heed, when ye speak of your experiences, and what God hath done, that ye do not lay, or ground your faith upon your experience, but upon the promise. It is a good speech that Parisiensis hath, Experience, says he, it is like the crutch, the lame man's crutch, it does uphold the lame man, but it does not cure him: and so an experience, it stays up thy soul for the present, but experience cannot cure you of your unbelief; it is only the promise cures you of your unbelief. It is said in Ps. cvi., concerning the children of Israel, "When they saw the Egyptians lie in the sea before them, then they believed in God, and sang his praise:" and the next words that follow are, "they soon forgat his works." Aye, when as we believe the word only because of experience, no wonder that we soon forget our experiences, and all. Therefore take heed, tell of your experiences, draw out your experiences for to strengthen your faith, yet lay not your faith upon your expeperience, but upon the word.

And again, above all things consider what great difficulties Jesus Christ hath broke through to come to you. Ye read of him so described in the Canticles, "He comes leaping over the mountains;" many are the mountains that Jesus Christ came leaping over to come to you. Passion work is greater and harder than creation-work: he came leaping over the mountains of work. Oh, shall Jesus Christ come leaping over mountains and difficulties to come to my soul,

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my soul, and shall I go over no mountains, and break through no difficulties to get to Jesus Christ? think what difficulties he broke through to come to you.

And, never speak with your difficulties or discouragements apart from the promise. If a man be travelling in the road, and a thief can sunder him from his company, draw him alone into the woods, a hundred to one but he takes his purse, if he save his life. And if the devil can part you from the promise, take you into the woods, where you shall see nothing but darkness, difficulties and discouragements; a hundred to one but he spoils you of all your comforts. Man or woman, does difficulty arise therefore; natural discouragements arise? Away to the promise, and say unto them when they come, I will never speak with you, unless it be in the presence of a promise.

Oh, but God's providence seems for to cross his promise.

Be it so; yet thou mayest believe, though God's providence seems for to cross his promise, yet thou mayest rest on the promise.

Oh, but I have a threatening set on upon my heart.

Be it so; yet thou mayest believe the promise, although the threatening have taken hold upon thee, and filled thee with trouble; for God does therefore threaten, that he may make way to a promise. God's promises do not make way to his threatenings, but his threatenings make way to his promises. God does therefore threaten that he may not fulfil; but God does therefore promise that he may fulfil. And therefore, though the threatening have taken hold upon thine heart, and thou liest under the apprehension of God's displeasure; get away to the promise, rest upon the promise.

Aye, but Jesus Christ hath withdrawn from me, and hid himself from me.

Be it so; yet thou mayest go to the promise. Christ doth therefore withdraw from thee, that he may draw thee to him. Jesus Christ does therefore hide himself, that he may shew thee his face more and more. Our brother Joseph, he cannot conceal himself long; his bowels and compassions will not let him.

Wherefore then, whensoever any difficulties or natural discouragements do arise upon you, come to this conclusion; now therefore will I trust in God, now therefore will I ven-

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ture upon Jesus Christ: oh, my soul, now venture, now venture, and say, Lord, such and such difficulties are risen; thou hast called me to this work; difficulties arise upon me: surely thou hast called me to this work; they are not therefore to make a stoppage in my proceedings, but to draw out my faith: now, therefore, I do here lay the weight of my poor guilty soul upon thee, do with me what is good in thine eyes: ah, Lord, my prayers are dead, my affections dead, and my heart dead; but thou art a living God, and I bear myself upon thee. Beloved, "If ye can believe, all things are possible; if you cannot believe, all things are impossible." Faith will make a thing easy, though it be never so difficult; as unbelief doth make a thing difficult, though it be never so easy. This is a certain truth, no difficulty can stand before faith. True, saving, justifying faith, carries the soul through all difficulties, discouragements, and natural impossibilities, to Jesus Christ. Oh, therefore, as you desire to grapple with the difficulties that you do meet withal, stir up yourselves in a way of believing, for you have heard that nothing else can do it. The Lord teach us to believe at a higher rate than ever yet we have done.

SERMON IV.

THE GREAT THINGS FAITH CAN DO.

"And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me, to tell of Gideon, and of Barak; and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, women received their dead raised to life again," &c.—Heb. xi. 32.

IN this Heb. xi. you have a little book of Chronicles, wherein the believers of the Old Testament do stand upon record for their great work of faith. In the former part of the chapter, the apostle doth instance in several believers at

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large; in the latter part he is more compendious, and draws up the instances into a narrower room: for, saith he, "The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephtha," &c. Now these believers that he doth instance in, in the latter part of the chapter, are of two sorts: some famous and of good reports for their actions, and some for their sufferings; some did great things, and some suffered great things: and both by their faith. Those that suffered great things, are mentioned in the following words: "Others were tortured, not accepting of deliverance." Those that did great things by their faith, in these verses; their persons are mentioned, and the fruits and effects of their faith, for which they are mentioned in these verses. Their persons are mentioned in verse 32, ye have their names there; their state, condition, and their order: their names, Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephtha, and David; their state and condition, some were kings, some were judges, some were prophets. Faith runs through all conditions and ranks of men; faith and true grace is able to make a plantation upon every condition of men. And as for their order here, Gideon is before Barak, and Samson is before Jephtha; yet if you look into the story in the Judges, you shall find Barak is before Gideon, and Jephtha before Samson. And here Gideon set first, and Samson first. Why? Because they excelled in faith; and those are most excellent in God's eyes, who are most eminent in faith; those are most excellent in God's eyes, who most excel in faith. But now as for the fruits and effects of their faith, they are many; here are no less than ten mentioned in these verses. They subdued kingdoms, verse 33: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms:" so the judges did, and so David also. And they wrought righteousness: so Samuel did, "Whose ox have I taken?" and so David did when he spared Saul. And they obtained promises; promises, that is the thing promised. God is so faithful, saith Beza, in fulfilling his promises, that the promise is put for the thing promised: they obtained the promises, that is, the thing promised. Now the promise they obtained, it was not the great promise of the Messiah, for that verse 39, "They received not the promise," that is, the great promise of the Messiah; but the promises they obtained, were particular

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promises of deliverance, victories and kingdoms: so they obtained promises, and so Gideon, and Barak, David and others did. And then they stopped the mouths of lions; so David and Daniel did. And they quenched the violence of fire; so the three children did. And escaped the edge or mouth of the sword; so Elijah and Elisha did. And out of weakness were made strong; so Hezekiah was. And they waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens; so the judges and David did. And women received their dead raised to life again; so the woman of Sarepta and the Shunamite did. So that now here you may see, what great things the believers of the Old Testament did by faith. And so the doctrine that I shall pitch upon at this time, riseth from all the words, and not from any particular clause or passage, but from the whole:

That true, saving faith, will do very great things.

It is true faith that the apostle here speaks of, as appears by the whole chapter; and these things that they did, as appears to the reader at first view, were great things. So that I shall not need to spend any time, for clearing of the doctrine from the words that it doth arise from; and all these verses and words, they are witnesses to it, they cry out this doctrine with one voice: True, saving faith, will do very great things.

For the opening and clearing whereof, I shall labour to shew,

First, That true saving faith is a doing, working, stirring grace.

Secondly, That true saving faith will do great things. And,

Thirdly, How faith comes to do such great things.

First, True saving faith is a doing grace, an active, working, doing, operative grace. The more spirits any thing hath, the more active it is. Faith, true saving faith, hath the spirit of the gospel in it; the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, and true saving faith, it hath the Spirit of this spiritual dispensation; and therefore it must needs be a very spiritual and working grace. It is called a work itself, in 1 Thess. i. 3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith;" and in 2 Thess. i. 2, "The work of faith with power." Our Lord and Saviour Christ saith, it is the work of God; "This is the work of God, that ye believe:" it is in itself a work.

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And it is a friend to work: true saving faith, it is a work, and it is a great friend to work, it is not an idle housewife. What is our sanctification, but our faith incarnate; it works love, it works by love; and love is very inventive, active and expensive: it is a friend to work; a work in itself, and a friend to work.

And it is also the first worker in the soul. "Trust in the Lord and do good;" not first do good and then trust in the Lord, trust in the Lord first: trust in the Lord and do good. It is the work that sets other works on work, the wheel that sets all other wheels a going, without which a man is idle though he be at work. As a child may be very busy at his play, yet but play; and a servant may be very busy about his own employment, and yet his master counts it an idleness, because he is not about his work appointed him. So, now, a man may be very busy in regard of the world, and yet he may be idle God-ward. *Nisi a Deo agendo, nil ages:* faith must be the first worker, and if faith be not the first, all other works are as nothing.

Yea, as faith is a work, and a friend of work, and a first worker, so it is an universal work. Faith is that grace that can turn its hand to every work; some can work exactly at one thing, but they are bunglers at another; but faith, true saving faith, can turn its hand to every business. Possibly a man may be sick, and he cannot pray himself, but yet he may believe; though prayer cannot turn its hand to this condition, yet faith can. Possibly a man may be very poor, and is not able to help another; liberality cannot turn its hand to this condition, but faith can work in it.

And not only so, but faith works best when it works alone, when it works all alone. If comfort come, and sense and feeling come, faith knows how to use these; but though a man have no sense and no comfort, yet faith can work, and faith works best when it works alone; when it works all alone, without these auxiliaries.

Yea, faith works best sometimes when it works in the dark; as it works best when it works alone, so sometimes it works best in the dark. Men can work well in the light but not in the dark, but though a man's condition be very dark, yet faith can work then: faith works best when it works in the dark. Faith loves to work like Christ, and Christ's great-

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est action of obedience was in the darkest time, when he was on the cross. I remember a speech of that good old man, Mr. Dod; when a man that was troubled in his mind lay a dying, he said to him, Sir, what will you say to Christ? when he was dying, did he not say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And was not Christ's highest piece of obedience upon the cross, in the dark, in a dark condition? Faith works best sometimes in the dark.

Yet further, faith, it works best at the last, and the longer it works the better; for faith grows by experience, and the longer that faith works, the more experience it gets; and the more experience faith gets, the stronger it is, and therefore faith works best at the last. Now put all these together; faith is a work, and faith is a friend to work, and faith is the first worker, and faith is an universal worker, and faith works best when it works all alone, and faith works best sometimes in the dark, and faith works best at the last; and certainly you have the first, namely this, that true saving faith is a doing grace, it is a working grace. But,

Secondly, You will say, What are those great things that faith will do; for we have heard that faith is a doing grace, that is the doctrine; faith will do, and do great things; but what are those great things that faith will do still?

Faith will do as great things now, surely, in gospel times, New Testament times, as ever in Old Testament times; and I shall not instance in those ten particulars, only so far as to make forth the general doctrine, and to bring it unto ourselves, I shall shew you what great things faith will do still, and shall speak to that more positively and absolutely, and then comparatively.

Faith, true saving faith, it will resist great temptations, it will perform great performances, it will suppress all your fears, it will mortify all your cares, it will assuage and subdue all your griefs, it will make you a stranger in this world, it will keep your hearts steady and upright in all the turnings and changes of your life, it will make you faithful under all your betrustments, it will realize eternity to you, and make those things visible to you that are in themselves invisible, and it will make you live in continual dependence on Christ, and fetch all from him. All these things are great things,

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and I must not dwell upon any of them, but only touch upon each of them.

Is it not a great matter for a man to resist and overcome great temptations? Joseph did so; sorely tempted by his mistress, but he overcame the temptation. How? He believed: "How shall I do this evil, and sin against my God?"

Is it not a great matter for a man to perform duties to the hazard of his life? Thus Daniel did, he set open his windows when he went to pray, prayed and kept to his duty to the hazard of his life. Why? Because he believed. Again,

Is it not a great matter to mortify your fears, and all your fears, your great fears? This faith will do: "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." Again,

Is it not a great matter to mortify your cares and extreme thoughtfulness? This faith will do. In Prov. xvi. 3, "Commit thy work unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." Commit thy work, there is faith, and thy thoughts shall be established. And,

Is it not a great matter to have your griefs assuaged when they are great? Faith will do it. Hannah was a woman of a sad and a sorrowful spirit, and the Lord gave her in a word, a particular word, and she believed, and was no more sad.

Is it not a great matter to be kept straight, and even, and steady, in times of changes, the great turnings and changes of your life? This faith will do. Job met with many changes, but his heart was kept steady and upright in the midst of all; "Lord, though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee." Again,

Is it not a great matter to be a stranger to the world, to be a stranger from the world? Faith will do this. It is said of Abraham, in Heb. xi. 9, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country:" mark the expression, "he sojourned in the land of promise." There are some outward blessings that we have by prayer, that we have by promise; it may be a child, or such a relation, that we have by prayer, and by promise, and we think we may be very indulgent to our affection in regard of that mercy: but see here, Abraham was a stranger in the land of promise, as in a strange country. And then again,

Is it not a great matter for a man to be faithful under all

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his betrustments? Caleb and Joshua were so; they were sent to spy out the land of Canaan, and when the other spies brought up an ill report, they were faithful in their report. Why? Because they believed, "The Lord hath given them into our hands as bread," say they; faith will make a man faithful under all his betrustments. And,

Is it not a great matter for a man to see those things that are invisible, to realize eternity, and to see those things that are invisible? "By faith Moses saw him that is invisible." And,

Is it not a great matter for a man to live in continual dependance on Christ, and fetch all from him? Faith will do this; for as Christ could do nothing without faith, he could do no great things there, because of their unbelief; so faith can do nothing without Christ, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Why? "Because I live by the faith of the Son of God." Faith will make a man live in continual dependance on Christ, and fetch all from him. Now, beloved, these are great things, every one of these is a great matter: but true, saving faith will do all these things.

But then to speak to it yet more comparatively; there are two or three great agents in the world, that are close at work, and faith will out-work them all, and do greater things than any of them. There is a carnal policy with power, which is a great agent, and worker, in reference to the affairs of the world. There is civil honesty, a great agent in reference to our dealing between man and man. And there are gospel gifts, parts, and common grace, which are great agents in reference to our religion. Now, not to shew the difference between them, but to give you a little taste, that I may make out the general doctrine, that faith doth work beyond all.

And if you compare it with power, power clothed with policy, or policy clothed with power: faith will do more than all policy and power can do. And I pray turn unto 2 Chron. xiii., where you shall see this clearly proved to you, verse 3. There is a great battle fought; "And Abijah set the battle in array, with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour:" Jeroboam had as many again, Abijah but four hundred thousand. Now if you look into verse 16., it

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is said the children of Israel fled before Judah, and Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter, verse 17. So there fell down slain of Israel, five hundred thousand chosen men, such a slaughter as you shall not hear of: Abijah had but four hundred thousand men, and they slew five hundred thousand. Why? They had power enough, they were as many again: what was the matter, did they want policy? It is said verse 13. But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about them; so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them: here was power, and here was policy, and yet this great army is beaten with half the company, and five hundred thousand slain: how comes this to pass? Indeed you read of the children of Judah, that they cried unto the Lord "They cried unto the Lord," verse 14. But if you will have the reason, look to verse 18, "Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time: and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers." See faith can do more than all the power and policy in the world can do; true saving faith can do more in reference to the affairs of the world too: what power is able to turn the tide? if the tide come in and go out, you may bring in your vessels with it, or send out your vessels; who is able to turn the tide? What power on earth is able to turn the tide? And what power of men can turn the power of providence; or policy of men, can turn the tide of providence? But faith can do it, true saving faith can turn the tide even of providence; and therefore it can do greater things than all power, the greatness of the world joined with policy.

There is another great agent in the world, and that is civil honesty and morality, which deals much between man and man; how may it appear that faith can do greater things than this?

That appears plainly thus:

Civil honesty and morality doth trade but in small matters, and therefore the civil, honest, moral man, he never breaks in his profession. Why? Because he trades not in great matters. When do you hear a noise of a poor man's breaking? When a great, rich merchant breaks, you have the noise of it through the city. When do you hear of ships or vessels miscarrying in narrow waters? In the seas, ships

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that launch out to sea, they are shipwrecked; but those that trade in narrow waters, they seldom or never shipwreck. So those professors that launch forth into the ocean of the gospel, they break sometimes; but the civil, moral man, he blesseth himself when he sees this; these, says he, are unconstant men, these are uneven men, sometimes for this, and sometimes for that opinion; but I am constant. Whereas the truth is, it is because he trades in narrow waters, in small things, and so never breaks, never suffers shipwreck. But now, true, saving faith trades in the high things of the gospel.

Though civility and morality may do much between man and man; yet it will never make a man to leave all to follow Christ. The young man that came to Christ, said, "All these things have I done;" but saith Christ, "Go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, and follow me;" he could not down with that. So that civility and morality will never make a man part with all to follow Christ, but true faith will. If Christ say, Follow me! saith faith; I will follow thee wherever thou goest.

And though a civil man may do much in a way of righteousness between man and man, yet he doth not deal with God through morality, doth not deal with God through man; faith doth, true, saving faith doth; "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, for thou Lord hast done it." Morality can say the first part. Suppose a moral and civil man be reviled, out of the goodness of his nature he can say the first part, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth;" but morality cannot speak the second part, "because thou Lord hast done it." Morality doth not deal with God through man, but faith doth, and so it doth greater things than this agent.

How may it appear that true, saving faith can do greater things than gospel parts, gifts, and common grace?

It appears thus:

Though gospel parts and gifts are very useful and profitable for the edifying of the body, for edifying of others; yet they will not humble a man and cause him to walk humbly with God. *Magnum non est magna facere*, it is no great matter to do great things; but for a man to do great things and think himself nothing, this is great. Now parts and

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gifts, they puff up; but true, saving faith doth humble. Mark the opposition in Hab. ii. 4: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up," towered up, saith the Hebrew, "his soul that is towered up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith."

True saving faith hath a *yet not I*. If you look into the New Testament, you shall find there is a threefold *yet not I*. One that relates to sin, Rom. vii., "I sin, yet not I." One that relates to spiritual life, "I live, yet not I." One that relates to duties, "I have laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I." True, saving faith hath this *yet not I*; parts and gifts know not this *yet not I*.

Though parts and gifts may be very useful unto the body, yet they will never make a perfect change in a man. Suppose a man hath very good parts and gifts and withal he be given to passion, ye shall observe his gospel parts and gifts will never take away his passion, but he is as passionate now as ever he was. Gospel parts and gifts never make a thorough change in a man, faith doth, and faith makes such a change, as a man is directly contrary unto what he was before. Zaccheus, an oppressor before, now saith he, "Lord, behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Why? Because he was a son of Abraham, a believer. And so the jailor, he whipt and scourged Paul and Silas; but when he came to believe, he takes them into his house and set meat before them. Why? For he believed and all his house. True, saving faith will make a perfect change; but parts and gifts will never do it.

As for common grace, though a man may rise to a very great profession thereby, he will never hold it; these colours are not laid in gospel oil, and it will never hold, it is but a varnish and it will off. But saith the apostle, "We are kept by the power of God through faith;" faith will hold. You see how it is with the leather that a man wears on his shoe, it will wear out; there are some poor people that go without shoes, and their skin is thin, not so thick as the leather, and yet it wears not off. Why? Because there is a life in it; the one grows thicker and thicker; the other thinner and thinner. Why? Because there is no life in it. So parts and gifts and common grace, they wear out because there is no life in them; but now, true, saving faith, there is life in it,

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and it will not wear out. So that thus you see, true, saving faith is above all others, considered alone. It will resist great temptations, it will perform great performances, it will mortify all your fears, it will subdue all your cares, it will assuage all your griefs, it will make you a stranger in this world, it will keep your hearts steady, and even, and upright in all the turns and changes of your life, it will make you faithful under all your betrustments, it will realize eternity to you, it will make those things visible to you, that are in themselves invisible, it will make you to live in continual dependance on Christ, and fetch all from him, it will do greater things than policy joined with power, it will do greater things than morality and civility, it will outshoot that in its own bow, and it will do greater things than gospel gifts, and parts, and common grace. Surely then, true, saving faith will do great things.

But then, you will ask me how comes it to pass that true, saving faith can do such great things?

Faith goes forth in the might of God's power, the almighty power of God, and therefore saith our Saviour, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible." And if you look into the scripture, you shall find that the great works of God, of his almighty power, are ascribed to faith, both in the Old Testament and in the New. In the Old Testament the great works of God were much expressed in victories over enemies; and in the New Testament the great works of God much in cures of diseases; and both these are given to faith; the great victories of the Old Testament given to faith; and the great miraculous cures of the New Testament given to faith; and will you know the reason? God will ascribe much to that grace that ascribes much to him; and set the crown upon the head of that grace, that sets the crown upon the head of his Son. Now the more that any man can wait upon God in the use of low, and mean, and poor, and no means, the more he doth ascribe unto God and to his power. It is said, By faith the walls of Jericho fell down. Did faith pull down the walls of Jericho? No, but it was the almighty power of God that pulled down the walls of Jericho; but this is said to be done by faith. Why? Because they did wait upon God in the use of ram's horns; and when a man

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can wait upon God in the use of ram's horns, then a man is said to live by faith.

As faith goes forth in the might of God's power, so in the might of God's promise; the promise is made to faith, the promise of doing great things is made to faith. In John xiv. 12. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father:" so that not only the promise is made to faith, but the promise of doing great things, is made to faith.

As faith doth go forth in the strength of the promise, so faith doth go forth in the strength of God's call: there is much might in God's call, faith goes forth in the strength and might of God's call. Read what the Lord said to Gideon, in Judges vi. 14. "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites:" what might was this? Go in this thy might, "have not I sent thee?" here is the might; go in this thy might: what might? the might of my call. God's call is a might, and when a man doth go forth in the might of God's call, he goes forth in a mighty strength; faith goes forth in the might of God's call.

As faith goes forth in the might of God's call, so it doth go forth in the sense of what God and Christ hath done for the soul; I know faith and sense and feeling differ; but I say, faith is very sensible of what the Father hath done, and what Christ hath done for poor sinners; and when a man is very sensible of what great things God hath done, and Christ hath done, then saith a man, Shall God do such great things for me; and shall Christ do such great things for me; and shall not I do great things again for God and Christ? Faith is very sensible of what God and Christ hath done for sinners. And thus faith makes a man do great things for God, faith goes forth in the might of God's power, faith goes forth in the the might of God's promise, faith goes forth in the might of God's call, and faith goes forth in the sense of what God and Christ hath done for the soul. And thus it comes to pass that faith will do very great things. And thus now I have done with the doctrinal part; I come to the application.

If this doctrine be true, true saving faith will do great

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things, and very great things; then we may here see the reason why men do no great things for God, why men do no great things in their generation, and why there are no great things in their generation, and why there are no great things found in men's conversation, no great things for the most part. It is because men do want this true saving faith, it is a working grace, an active grace; and therefore if I be not a worker for God, it argues I have none of this faith. True saving faith, it will do great things for God; what shall we say to those that cannot do small things? It is a small thing to leave drunken company, a small thing to leave a foolish fashion, a small thing to leave an idle word, faith or troth; men cannot do small things; true saving faith will do great things, and very great things. Oh, what shall we say of those that are so far from doing great things, that they cannot do small things; have they faith? Let not men be deceived. I say again, true saving faith will do very great things. Was it not a very great matter for a young man brought up in the court, to leave all the court preferment, and to choose affliction with the people of God, rather than the preferments of the court? this Moses did by faith. Was it not a great matter for a people to venture into the sea, merely upon a command? this faith made the people do. By faith Peter ventured on the waters of the sea; by faith Israel entered into the sea. True, saving faith is a venturing grace, it will venture far for God, and far after God. Was it not a great matter for Rahab the harlot, an inn-keeper, a whore, to become a saint, a believer; for a drunkard and for an adulterer to become a believer, is it not a great matter? By faith Rahab the harlot believed. Certainly, where there is faith in truth, it will make a man do great things; there will be something that is great found in his life and conversation. Thus it was with these men, Gideon and Barak. It will be said that their faith was a faith of miracles, and they wrought miracles by it. Indeed some did, all did not; for "By faith they wrought righteousness," the text saith, and that is not a miracle: this is one of the great things. Oh, but their faith was strong, and our's weak. But Gideon's faith was weak, he was fain to have two or three signs to underprop his faith; and Barak's faith was weak, he would not go forth against the enemy without the woman Deborah. Oh, but these

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men were busied about great works and great employment. Mistake not, you may do great things by faith in small employment. It was no great matter of employment for the poor woman to give two mites; it was a great matter she did: why? because she did it by faith. And so the woman of Sarepta, when the prophet said, Give me a cake first; it was no great matter that her faith was employed about a cake and a little that she did, but a great matter in giving him first. So that I say, faith may do great things, although it be not employed about great matters. Oh, but I do great things, and therefore I hope I have this true, saving faith. I do great things: that is well. But I pray only consider this, Those things are great, which are great in their own present generation: that which was a great matter heretofore, may be a small matter now; and that which was a small matter heretofore, may be a great matter now. In the times of the bishops, it was a small matter then to keep the doctrine of religion, and a great matter to oppose the ceremonies; now it is a small matter to oppose the ceremonies, and a great matter to keep the truth and the doctrine of religion. I say, that which was a great matter before, may be a small matter now; and that which was but a small matter heretofore, may be a great matter now. But if your faith be true, you will do great things; there will be some great thing or other found in your life, and such as are great indeed.

If this doctrine be true, in case, christians, that you have any great work to do, call in for faith, call in for faith. In case ye have a great outward employment, you will send to the most skilful man in that faculty; if it be to build a house or go to law, you will call in for the most skilful agent. True saving faith is a great agent, a great worker; and therefore if you have any great work to do, call in faith, look to your faith. It is said of Mr. Tyndale, in the story of his life; there being a conjuror in the Low Countries, where he lived, that would undertake to fetch a dish of meat off any prince's table, and make a great dinner for his friends; and it being reported he had often done it, they being met together to behold this skill, Mr. Tyndale would go in among them, and he sets himself to believe that this fellow should not be able to do it; and when all his company was met together, he could not do it; saith he, There sits the man that hinders

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me. Oh, faith can do more than all the conjurors in the world. Have you any great matter to do, christians? call in for faith. And certainly there are yet great things to do: antichrist to fall, the Jews to be called, great things to be done for this land. God hath done great things, yet greater things are to be done; God hath done great things for your, and my family, there are yet greater things to be done; God hath done great things for your soul, there are yet greater things to be done. When any great thing is to be done, christians, christians, call in for faith, set faith a work now.

You will say, What shall we do, and how shall we so improve our faith as we may do great things thereby?

Study much the greatness of God; for the more you study the greatness of God, the more will your mind be grandeured, greatened, and your faith strengthened. Children do little things, because their minds are not upon great things. Kings and princes are the great men of the earth, they do great things, for their minds are great; they have great minds. Why? Because their minds are exercised about great things. Saith Solomon, I will build a house, a great house. Why? For it is to the great God. Would you do great things? Study much the greatness of God. Thus will your mind be great and your faith strengthened to do great things.

If you would so improve your faith, as you may do great things thereby, keep close to the ordinances of God. Faith lives upon God in the ordinances. Those that cast off the ordinances do not live by faith. What then? By experiences, by revelations, impressions, and visions, I had almost said by fancies; they do not live by faith; faith lives upon God in the use of ordinances, and it gathers strength thereby. Look I pray again into 2 Chron. xiii., and you shall see how Abijah's faith was raised; by faith he overcame Jeroboam, and slew five hundred thousand of them together. But I pray how did he strengthen his faith? Mark the words: "And Jeroboam came out against him, and Abijah stood upon a mountain, and said, Hear ye me, Jeroboam, and all Israel," verse 4. "Ought ye not to know, that the Lord God of Israel, gave the kingdom of Israel to David for ever?" And verse 9: "Have ye not cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands?" So that "who-

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soever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock, and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods. But as for us, (see how he strengthens his faith,) the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests which minister unto the Lord, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business, and they burn unto the Lord, every morning and every evening, burnt sacrifices and sweet incense; the shew-bread also set in order upon the pure table, and the candlestick of gold, with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the Lord our God; but ye have forsaken him, and behold God himself is with us for our captain," &c. He argues God had not forsaken him, because they had not forsaken the ordinances. Would you therefore, so improve your faith, as you may do great things thereby? keep close to the ordinances.

If you would so improve your faith, as you may do great things thereby, do not check your faith, do not rate off your heart from believing, do not chide off your heart from believing, let your heart believe to the utmost. Our Lord and Saviour Christ, hath given us a very good encouragement in this respect; for, saith he, "I say unto you, whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them:" do but believe it, saith our Saviour Christ. I charge you, saith he, do not doubt, do not chide off your faith, do not check your faith, do not rate off your heart from believing; there are many do so, they check their faith by doubting and rate off their faith by unbelief.

If you would so improve your faith, that you may do great things thereby, use your faith to do small things, put your faith to work every day, use your faith to do small things. It is a good rule; do not commit any sin, because it is small; do not neglect any duty, because it is not great: and though the thing be small, put your faith to work in ordinary matters, put your faith to work. Sometimes you come to a great matter and you put on your faith there; but because your faith is not used to small things, your faith will not come on here. I remember a speech of Mr. Greenham concerning suffering; saith he, If you would suffer hard things from papists, be content to suffer small things from protestants; and if you would be able to suffer hard things from enemies, you

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must be content to suffer small things from friends; saith he, you will never be able to suffer great things from enemies, if you are not able to suffer small things from friends. So say I in the point of doing; you will never be able to do great things by faith, if your faith be not used to do small things. And therefore, christians, in all things you do, the life you live in the flesh, put your faith to work in your particular callings, in small things; and when your faith is used to do small things, you will be able to do great things; but you will never be able to improve your faith to do great things, if you use not your faith to do small things.

Study much, and look upon the call you have to any work, and do not stand poring upon your own ability, or upon the difficulty of the work: thus these worthies, when the Lord called them, the work was great and difficult, and they were weak; but they looked upon God's call, and they did not stand poring upon their own abilities; but as Abraham considered not his own body, so these, and therefore they did great things by faith. Possibly a man is called to a place in the magistracy, and he looks upon it as a great work; I am not able, saith he, it is beyond me: so a man is called to the ministry, I have no parts, nor gifts, the work is beyond me. So for believing, a man is commanded to believe, but I cannot believe, my heart is dead, I cannot believe: whereas now, if men did but look upon the call of God, they would be able to do great things for God. Either, christian, thou art commanded to believe, or not: if thou art not commanded to believe then unbelief is no sin; and if you are commanded to believe, then you are called to it; do not stand poring upon the difficulty of your work, but look upon the call of God; and thus shall your faith work and do great things. And thus I have done with the main doctrine that grows out of these words. There are some particular notes, that as little twigs, do grow from this great oak, which I shall draw out, and so conclude; and that is out of verse 32.

In that the apostle saith, "What should I say more? for the time would fail me," &c. The number of believers in the times of the old testament, it seems was not small: "The time would fail me," saith he, to tell of the believers of the old testament: few shall be saved indeed comparatively;

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but through grace many there are that do believe. If there were many in the old testament times, certainly then there are many now in the new testament times, that do believe.

In that the apostle doth here instance in Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah: Gideon and Barak, he instances in them, thus much you may note; God will own that faith, that is but weak at first. Gideon's faith was weak at the first, Barak's faith was weak at the first; it is more like to live, this faith that is weak at the first, than that which is born with teeth; faith that is weak at the first, God will own. It is true, not only for faith that is weak at first, but all weak faith; God will own the weak faith and commend the strong faith; he will bear with the weak faith, and commend the strong faith. See it in the case of of Thomas; "Thomas, (saith he,) reach hither thy hand, and thrust thy finger into my side: Lord, (saith he,) I believe, my Lord, and my God:" well, saith Christ, Thomas, thou believest: here he owns his faith though it is weak, but commends the strong faith: "Blessed is he that hath not seen, and yet hath believed." Christ will own the weak faith, and commend the strong faith; but I say, he will own the faith that is weak at the first. May be, here are some that are believers, that begin to look after Christ, some young christians that begin to look after God, and turn from their evil ways, and begin weakly at the first; remember this, God will own that faith as weak as it is.

But God sets here Gideon before Barak, and Samson before Jephthah. The second note from thence is, though the Lord will own the weak faith, weak at the first, yet God doth most highly esteem of them that do most excel in faith; Gideon is before Balak, Samson before Jephthah: those are in most account with God that do most excel in faith.

But then, in that the apostle doth here instance in Samson for a believer. It is possible that a great sinner may become a true believer? Yea, possibly a man may have true faith, yet he may fall foully, so Samson; but if he do fall foully, and be a believer, he is like to pay dearly for it; so Samson, both his eyes went for it. But though a man do pay dearly for it, yet God will return again and own his faith, and record his faith. So Samson's faith is.

In that the apostle doth here make mention of Jephthah:

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Jephthah, who was a bastard, under a reproach, yet recorded for a believer. Possibly a bastard may become a believer; one that lies under great reproach in regard of parentage may become a true believer. Behold what that is, that will roll away reproach from a family, it is faith, true saving faith. Behold, here was a reproach upon Jephthah and his family as a bastard; now he believes, and faith rolls away the reproach from his person, and from his family, and he is recorded as a believer. Let none be discouraged in regard of any reproachful condition that they are in; true faith will roll away the reproach, and by faith you may become of good report.

In that the apostle doth speak of David: "Of David, also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." Consider, I pray, these were extraordinary men. When then, God hath any extraordinary work to do, he will raise up extraordinary men to do it; and when God doth raise up a man extraordinarily, he will give extraordinary gifts. But what I would have you consider thence, is this; that we may make use of extraordinary examples to strengthen our ordinary faith: here are extraordinary cases, and brought in by the apostle to this end and purpose, to strengthen our faith. Be not discouraged, then, when you go into Scripture and read of extraordinary examples. Satan tells you, Aye, but this is an extraordinary example, and it reacheth not me: do not say so, God will make use of extraordinary examples to strengthen ordinary faith.

But to end all. You see what high esteem God hath of faith; these men did great matters, Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah, and David; yet their great actions are brought in here, upon the account of their faith; *Fides nobilitat omnes;* it is faith that raiseth a man. Great things they did, but those things are upon record only as they were wrought by faith, and their faith was weak, and laboured under many infirmities. Look into this xith of Hebrews, here is no mention made of Samson's infirmities, here is no mention made of Rahab's infirmities; here is mention of their faith, but their infirmities past by, and not once mentioned; their faith is mentioned, and all the great things that they did, mentioned only upon the account of faith. What a great esteem hath God of faith! What a mighty encou-

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ragement, then, should this be to all that hear the word of the Lord this day, to get faith, to strengthen your faith. Oh, you that have no faith at all, and some such there may be here; you that have no faith at all, get faith, get faith; and you that have true saving faith, improve it to do great things by it; and the truth is, if you have true saving faith, you will do it, and there will be some great things found in your conversation: for you remember the doctrine, true saving faith will do very great things. And thus I have done with the first rank of believers. Their doing is first mentioned, their suffering follows.

SERMON V.

THE GREAT THINGS FAITH CAN SUFFER.

"And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings: yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being afflicted, destitute, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy, they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." —Heb. xi. 35.

THIS xith chapter of the Hebrews, being a chronicle of the Old Testament believers; we find here the report of a doing and a suffering faith. The doing faith is described and commended by several instances at large in the former part of the chapter, and more compendiously and briefly at verse 32: "What shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David, also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, women received their dead raised to life again."

In the words that I have chosen to speak unto at this time,

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you have another sort and rank of believers, famous in their generation for their suffering faith. I have spoken unto the former in a neighbouring congregation, having shewed that this faith will do great things. Now in these words we have a suffering faith; for by faith they should be carried through these sufferings: thus are the words to be understood. Others by faith were tortured; and others by faith had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; and others by faith were stoned, sawn asunder, &c. It seems, then, that these the apostle here speaks of, were such as lived in the time of the Maccabees; they did not live after Christ, for it is said at verse 39, "They received not the promise;" Christ was not come when they lived. And they did not live in the times of the prophets, or before; for the apostle had brought down his chronicle unto the days of the prophets, as ye read in verse 32. So that these must needs live in the times of the Maccabees. It seems, then, that ecclesiastical histories may at some times be made use of in the preaching of faith.

Now the things that these believers suffered were great, hard, and very many. Here are nine sorts of suffering set down in the text. It is said that they were racked, or tortured: some read it, beaten with clubs, but it comes all to a reckoning; for when they were racked, they were beaten with clubs. And the apostle saith, that "they accepted not deliverance, that they might be partakers of a better resurrection;" upon which words some do think that there are degrees of glory, and that the suffering saints should have a better degree of glory at the resurrection; but the word *better*, is spoken in comparison with that deliverance that was offered to them. In scripture phrase, afflictions are deaths, and when a man is delivered from an affliction he hath a resurrection. When a man hath been sick, and at the grave, and raised to health again, he hath a resurrection, in scripture language. Now this resurrection or deliverance is refused, hoping for a better resurrection, having an eye to the great, and last, and better resurrection. That is the first; they were tortured or racked. And they had cruel mockings: there is a mocking, and there is a cruel mocking, when a man shall insult over another, and laugh at him in his misery, this is a cruel mocking; as the Jews derided our Saviour on the cross; this is a great aggravation of affliction, this they endured. That is the

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second; they had trial of cruel mockings. And they were scourged, and whipped up and down like rogues, as if the world was too good for them, they not worthy to live. And they were in bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, They were sawn asunder. And they were tempted; some read it, burned, by the change of a letter or two they read it so, "and were burned:" but it seems their afflictions were filled with temptations, and temptation is a great aggravation of affliction; so they were tempted. And they were slain with the sword. And they wandered up and down in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, in mountains and caves and dens of the earth, driven from their own habitation; and these are such of whom it is said here, "the world was not worthy." And these hard things they endured by faith, saith the apostle. So that here, now, you see what hard things faith will suffer, true saving faith (for of that the apostle speaks here) is a suffering grace, a bearing grace, it will carry us through all afflictions, although they be never so great: and so the doctrine from all the words is this:

True, saving faith can, and will suffer very hard things.

It is that grace that will carry us through all afflictions and sufferings, though they be never so great. True, saving faith can, and will suffer very hard things.

This doctrine lies upon the surface of the words and all the words together speak it; but for the further opening and clearing of it: First I shall labour to shew you that it is possible that a true believer, one very precious in the eyes of God, may meet with most unworthy things from the hands of men. Secondly: That faith will carry through these. And thirdly: How, and by what means, faith will carry a man through these.

First: It is possible that a true believer, one very precious in the eyes of God, may meet with most unworthy usage from the hands of men; these were hard things and unworthy that these believers suffered; yet they were such of whom the world was not worthy. You know there is an old enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; a malignant disposition in the men of the world against the saints and people of God, they must work as they are; the wicked and men of the world are an unworthy people. But

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because you judge yourselves unworthy, saith the text, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles, because ye judge yourselves unworthy." "Go (saith our Saviour unto his disciples) and preach, and if any be worthy stay;" the men of the world are unworthy, an unworthy people. Yea, they are an unreasonable people, absurd men, impertinent men that have not faith. They are compared in scripture unto beasts for their unreasonableness; "beware of dogs," saith the apostle. When our Lord and Saviour Christ did send out his disciples to preach the gospel, "beware of men," saith he; I do not say, take heed and beware of lions and bears, but beware of men, you shall find such unreasonable dealing by men, therefore beware of men. Now if the men of the world be an unworthy people and unreasonable, will ye wonder that the saints and people of God meet sometimes with unworthy usage from them? It is possible. To raise it a little higher; possibly the more precious a man is, the more unworthy usage he may meet withal. The apostle Paul was a most precious man in his day and generation, and yet what unworthy usage had he? It is said in 1 Cor. iv. 11, "Unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things unto this day." We are the filth, we are made the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things unto this day. Some think that the apostle here doth relate unto that of one man dying for the people, the guilt of all the people being upon him. Others, that it is a similitude taken from a kind of tumbrel and vessel that goes up and down the city, that ye throw all the filth into. But I rather take the two Greek words, περικαθαρμαῖα and περιψημα to relate unto that in Lament. iii. 45: "Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people." In the Hebrew: "Thou hast made us the off-scouring, and the filth, and refuse in the midst of the people." Thus Paul was made, and yet Paul a precious man; he laboured more abundantly than they all. So that I say, it is possible that the more precious a man is, the more unworthy usage he may meet withal from men.

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Yea, to raise it a little higher; it is possible that a man may meet with most unworthy dealings therefore, because he is precious in the eyes of God; not only in regard of men; but in regard of God: for God doth sometimes so order things in his providence, that he doth put men to suffer hard things, because they are precious in his eyes. "Unto you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer." Suffering sometimes is a gift, it is a great gift. A suffering gift, saith Chrysostom, is a greater gift than the gift of miracles; for saith he, if God do give me a gift to work miracles by, I am in God's debt; but if God do give me a suffering gift, he is pleased thereby to become my debtor; suffering sometimes becomes as a reward for doing. Ye read of the heifers that brought home the ark out of the Philistines' country, that when they brought the ark home, the Israelites they take the heifers, and they offer up the heifers unto God for a sacrifice. Why so? saith one, it is an ill requital to the heifers. No, the heifers could not have a higher honour put upon them; this their suffering is a reward for their doing. And so what greater honour can a man have after all his doing for God, than to be called forth to suffer, and to bear witness to the truth? Indeed we do not think thus, but you will say, Oh, surely God doth not love me because he puts such hard suffering work upon me. But I pray tell me, suppose that a general should have some great work or service to do, and he should single and pick some half a dozen soldiers for to go upon this work; would these soldiers say, Surely the general doth not prize us, he doth not honour us, nor love us, because he puts us upon this hard service. No, but they will say the contrary; Surely the general prizeth us, loves us, and honours us, because he puts us upon such a hard service as this is. So here, it doth rather argue that the Lord doth honour, love, and prize you, in that he puts you upon a hard work and service. But now, if these things be true, then surely this first branch is sufficiently made out, That a man may be very precious in the eyes of God, and yet meet with most unworthy usage from the hands of men. That is the first thing.

Secondly: You will say, How shall a man be able to go through these hard things and sufferings; what will carry him through them?

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True, saving faith will do it and nothing but this faith will do it; "I had verily fainted in mine affliction (saith David) but that I believed." It is faith and faith alone that will keep from fainting under suffering. And to make this out a little unto you:

The more assurance of God's love any man hath, the more able he will be to encounter with sufferings and with afflictions: the sight of God's love doth cause love in us to God, *Amor amoris causa*, love is the cause of love, and much water cannot quench love, it endures all. Now the assurance of God's love grows upon faith, it is the flower of faith; faith is the stalk, assurance is the flower; assurance is the cream of faith, "Let us draw near with full assurance of faith."

The more that any man is able to gather up and to manage his experiences, the more able he will be to suffer, to encounter with sufferings; experience is a great help in suffering times. Now it is faith and only faith that can gather up and manage experiences. "The Lord (saith he) that delivered me from the lion and the bear:" it was faith that did gather up this experience and did manage it. So in Psalm lvi. 9, "When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back:" how do you know this? saith he, "this I know," how? "for God is for me;" this I know, for God is for me. I have this experience of God, that he is with me and for me; and therefore I know it. But

The more that any man is able to apply the promise, the more able he will be to suffer, to encounter with sufferings; the promise is a great shelter in a rainy day. Now there is nothing but faith that can apply the promise; the promise is the plaster that none but the warm hand of faith can lay on upon the sore: if it be laid on by any other hands, it will not stick. I have heard of a poor, doubting soul, drawing near to her death, and the minister pressing one promise after another; O Sir, saith she, these are gracious promises, but they will not stick upon my heart. And what is the reason that the promise indeed doth not stick upon many hearts? but because it is laid on by the chill and cold hand of unbelief. Remember faith hath a warm hand, and only faith hath a warm hand to lay on the promise. But then again,

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The more that any man doth see his call clearly, his call to suffer, the more able he will be to encounter with his sufferings. Now it is faith only that doth trade with the call of God. God's call is a great wall, a strong wall; God's call can make a wall of water. When the children of Israel went through the Red Sea, the water stood like a wall on each side; it was God's call that made those walls. There is nothing but faith that doth converse with the call of God, and makes out the call of God. Three things call us to suffer: 1. The commandment of Christ: "If thou wilt be my disciple, thou must deny thyself, and take up thy cross." 2. The example of Christ, for thereunto are we called, in 1 Pet. ii. 5; Christ hath left us an example of suffering. And 3. Suffering strength with suffering opportunity. Now there is nothing but faith is able to discern these things; and therefore faith, and faith alone, is that grace under Christ, which can carry us through our affliction and suffering, although they be never so great.

But you will say, We have heard and read of many that have suffered hard things, and yet had none of this faith; no true, saving faith, and yet have suffered great and hard things.

True; you have heard, it may be, of some Jesuits dying for their religion. It is possible that a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion too; but, as Austin speaks, there is an unlikeness of suffering in the likeness of suffering. As, saith he, gold is in the same fire with the wood and with the straw; with the same fire the straw is consumed, and the gold is refined. Things suffered may be alike, and yet a great unlikeness in the suffering. And to clear up this to you, that you may see that faith alone is able to do this:

Though a wicked man may suffer very great and hard things, yet he may also suffer as an evil-doer. "If ye suffer for evil doing (saith the apostle), what thanks have ye?" But faith, true, saving faith, it doth well and suffers ill.

And though a wicked man may suffer much, and very hard things, yet he doth not suffer upon choice; he would choose rather, if it were at his choice, to make a breach upon conscience, than a breach in his estate, for to lose his conscience, than to lose his life; he doth not suffer upon choice,

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faith doth. "By faith Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." True, saving faith, it suffers great and hard things, and that upon choice.

And though a wicked man may suffer much, yet he doth not lay the stress of all upon the word of faith; the stress of all is laid upon somewhat else. Faith loves to suffer, and it lays the stress of all a man's sufferings upon the word of faith.

Though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon an account of religion; yet it may be he is sullen, or froward, or discontented, not cheerful: but faith suffers cheerfully. Paul and Silas sung in the stocks; and the primitive christians took with joyfulness the spoiling of their goods. And so the martyrs in Queen Mary's days. It is reported that when Mr. Philpot was in the dungeon, the bishop sent to him to know why he was so merry? Seeing a pair of stocks in the dungeon, saith he, there is a pair of organs that I have not played on yet; making himself cheerful in the time he was in the dungeon. And meeting with a minister that had recanted, and informing him better, the minister made a recantation of his recantation, and was as cheerful as any others. Faith suffers cheerfully.

Though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion; yet he will rest upon his sufferings. Faith will make one suffer, and keep one from resting upon one's suffering. As in regard of duty, faith will make one perform a duty, and it will keep one from resting upon that performance; so in regard of sufferings, faith will make one suffer, and it will keep one from resting upon one's suffering. In case that a man hath done much, faith will put him on to suffer as if he had done nothing; and in case a man hath suffered much, faith will put him upon doing, as if he had suffered nothing: according to that of our Saviour, "He that will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Follow me; when? After a suffering; not to sit down and rest there, but to follow me after a suffering.

Again, though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion, and be very confident, yet he will give in at last. I have read of a great atheist that was burnt to death in Paris, for blaspheming of Jesus Christ.

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And as he was going to the stake, saith he to the friars and priests that followed him: Behold, how boldly I go to the fire: as for your Lord and Master Christ, he went trembling to his death, and sweat drops of blood; but I, in the strength of reason, under which I sacrifice my life, go with boldness unto these flames. But when he came there, and his tongue was cut out for blasphemy, the story saith, that then he cried out, and roared out like a bull. *Vidi ego hominem*, saith the author, I saw the man, I saw him when he was at the stake. In the time of his liberty he was loose; in the time of his imprisonment, he was sullen; and when he was at the stake, he was mad, with horror of conscience mad. Oh, but true saving faith will not flinch, and give in at last. The three children did not only come to the fire, but rid out the storm. But I say no more in this, only thus:

Though a wicked man may suffer much, and that upon the account of his religion; yet he doth not bring forth the quiet fruit of righteousness: but true, saving faith doth, it suffers, and brings forth the quiet fruits of righteousness. So that now you see by all this, that it is faith alone, it is true, saving faith, and faith alone, that will carry a man through sufferings. But then,

Thirdly, you will say, How and by what means can faith do this? What is there in faith to do it, to carry a man through hard things, and through all sufferings, although they be never so great?

It is the work of faith to make a man resign and give up his will to the will of God; and when a man can do so, what may he not suffer?

It is the work of faith, the proper work of faith, to cleave close unto the commandment of God. True, Satan, I am an unworthy creature; but God hath commanded me to believe. True, I am a great sinner; but God hath commanded me to believe. Faith doth peremptorily stick unto the commandment, and it leaves God to answer unto the objections and inconveniences that follow upon his obedience to the commandment; it leaves that to God. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out, obeyed, not knowing whither he should go. Now when a man can do this, what may he not suffer?

It is the proper work of faith to close with the gospel,

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whereby the soul doth receive the fulness of the Spirit, the promise of the Father. Now when a man's heart is filled with the Spirit of God, what may he not suffer? Pray do but consider the apostles, after that the Spirit came upon them; you know they would suffer any thing, though it were never so great. Before the Spirit came upon them, though they had the personal presence of Christ, they could not suffer any thing, though it was never so small. Now faith doth close with the promise of the gospel, whereby the soul doth receive the Spirit of God, the promise of the Father.

It is the proper work of faith to look upon the recompense of reward. By faith Moses had an eye to the recompense of reward, and so chose affliction with the people of God. Saith our Saviour to his disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled." How so, Lord? Saith he, "I go to prepare a place for you: in my Father's house there are many mansions." Faith shews one the glory and the joys of heaven; and when a man sees those things, what may he not suffer?

The more that a man can see the hand of God as a Father upon the rod, the more able he will be to suffer, and the more cheerful. Ye bring a child to school, and he sees the school hung with rods, in every corner a rod, and the child is afraid: but if his father's house be set with rods, the child is not afraid in his father's house. Now faith, true, saving faith, will shew one the hand of a Father upon the rod: "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away," saith faith. "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, for thou, Lord, hast done it," saith faith.

The more a man can see to the end of his affliction and suffering, the more able he will be to go through it. Now faith tells a man that there is an end. "No temptation (saith the word of faith) hath befallen you, but what is common;" and with the temptation there is an outlet, there is a door, a door in the ark, although the door may be under water, and the outlet may be under water. Faith doth not only tell a man that there is an end, but that the end shall be good, and all shall work together for his good; yea, it tells a man that his affliction shall be but for a moment, and that moment shall be recompensed with abundance of comfort. Ps. xxx. 5: "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his

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favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." So also in Isa. liv. 7. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercy will I gather thee: in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness, will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Faith tells us this. Now when a man knows, and considers this, what may he not suffer?

It is the proper work of faith to look on both sides of the dispensation; there is a dark side and there is a light side in affliction and suffering. Sense and reason look only on the dark side, but faith looks to both sides of the dispensation. It is written of Mr. Latimer, the blessed martyr, that when he was going to the stake, taking leave of his fellow prisoners, saith he, Be of good comfort, O my friends and brethren, for though we go to the stake to-day, and be burnt to fire, we shall light such a candle in England as shall never be put out; we shall make such a fire in England to-day, as shall never be quenched. He saw both sides of the dispensation, because he believed. Faith will shew one both sides of the dispensation.

It is the proper work of faith, to see one contrary in another, or through another. It will see the smiles of God in the midst of frowns; it will see love in the midst of anger; it will see order in the midst of confusion; it will see mercy in the midst of misery; it will see a door of hope in the valley of Achor. Faith, it looks upon things with the prospective of the promise; and the promise speaks on this wise, in Deut. xxxii. 36; saith the Lord there, "The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself of his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." Faith, I say, sees one contrary in another, or beyond another; and when a man can do so, what may he not suffer.

And if God do engage to help and succour in afflictions, and if the Lord do count himself engaged to succour, deliver, and help in affliction, because men trust in the Lord; surely faith can do very much in the day of affliction. Now I pray look into scripture, and you shall see that the Lord is engaged upon this account in Ps. xxxvii. 40: "And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the

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wicked, and save them, because they trust in him." So in Isa. xxvi. 3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Mark the words, Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, so you read it; but in the Hebrew the words run thus: "Thou wilt keep peace, peace;" not peace and doubting, not peace and trouble; but peace, peace. Why; Because he trusteth in thee. But I cannot trust in God, I have no assurance of God's love. Mark the words, he will keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; he doth not say, who hath assurance of God's love, but if it be but a faith of reliance, though it be not a faith of assurance; he will keep him in peace, peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Now if the Lord be thus engaged to help and succour men that do believe, then certainly faith can do very much in a suffering day. Now I have given you an account of the general, how it comes to pass that faith can do it. Faith will carry us through all our sufferings, though they be never so great, and you see how faith can do it, and so the doctrine is clear.

Now for application.

If true saving faith be such an accommodation unto all our suffering, then, in case that any of you are to suffer any great suffering, the first thing you do, call in for faith. As I said upon the former doctrine, seeing that faith will do great things; and therefore if you have any great thing to do, call in for faith. So now I say upon this doctrine, Seeing that true saving faith can and will suffer very hard things; in case you have any thing to suffer, first call in for faith, call in for faith. If you have a great sickness, you will send for the best physician that hath the most skill at such a disease. Faith hath the best skill at your sufferings, and therefore send and call in for faith as soon as ever you come to the brink of these waters, call for your faith, and look to your faith.

You will say, But these are no suffering times, the winter is past, and there is no suffering now.

Then bless God and praise the Lord that you have so much gospel liberty as you have. But our Lord and Saviour saith, that in the last days, there shall be such tribulation as never was; and I am sure we are fallen into the last days. Our brethren in the vallies of Piedmont, they have suffered;

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and the apostle commands us to be in bonds with those that are in bonds, and to be afflicted with those that are afflicted; what do you know what your faith may do for them?

But to come a little nearer ourselves. Is there never a servant here that suffers from an evil master, that would fain go to the ordinance, frequent the ordinance, but checked, scorned, and despised by his master? Is there never a husband here, or wife here, that suffers hard things from his or her relation, merely upon the account of religion? Is there never a man or woman here that hath suffered hard things from the hand of his or her kindred, since they began to look towards Christ? Is there never a professor here that suffers from the hand of some professor? What devouring among us, biting, consuming one another? Of all reproachings and sufferings, you will find those most bitter that come from professors, when one professor doth reproach another, and slander another, and persecute another. Now if there be any here, unto you I speak, call in for faith, whatsoever your sufferings be, call in for faith.

But suppose there be none of these sufferings among us, who knows how soon you or I may be called forth to sufferings, if not in the public, yet in our particular? I have heard of a good man and woman, that were feasting at a great dinner upon the account of God's goodness and mercy to their family; and while they were at dinner, celebrating the goodness of the Lord to their family, them and their children, comes a messenger in and saith, One of your children is dropt into the well and drowned. Beloved in the Lord, who knows how soon a relation of yours or mine may be in the well; how soon such a comfort of yours or mine may be in the well? Wherefore call in for faith, in all your sufferings call in for faith.

You will say unto me, What shall we do that we may so strengthen or improve our faith, as that we may bear up in a way of believing against sufferings; for I am a man, or a woman that, I confess, have met with sufferings, and I am seldom out of sufferings, sometimes in my body, sometimes in my name, sometimes in my estate, sometimes in my relation, and the Lord knows what I may be called to suffer; what shall we do that we may so strengthen or improve our

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faith, that we may bear up in a way of believing, against all our sufferings?

Consider frequently what great things the Lord hath done for you already. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High; I will remember all thy wondrous works," saith the Psalmist; stirring up his faith and getting strength from faith. The consideration of what great things God hath done for you already, will engage your heart and make you willing to suffer. For example, go along with me a little, and I will instance only in that great matter of your first conversion and turning to God. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, all thy sins were pardoned, past, present, and to come; I say, virtually those that are to come. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou wert made the child of God, and heir of the kingdom which is incorruptible, undefiled; and which fadeth not away. That day thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou hadst the key of the scripture put into thy bosom, I say, thou hadst the key of the scripture put into thy bosom to wear it, I mean the Spirit of God. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thy old nature was taken away, and thou wert made partaker of the divine nature. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou wert received into union with Christ and into communion, thou wert received into union and into communion with the Father, and with Jesus Christ. That day that thou wert converted and brought home to God, thy soul was freed; those that the Son makes free, they are free indeed; though your will were not *libera*, yet it was *liberata;* as soon as a man is converted and brought home to God, he is free to duty, though not from duty; and he is free from his sin, though he be not free to his sin. That day thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou wert received unto the special protection of God, though not to free, yet to sanctify and sweeten your affliction. That day you were converted and brought home to God, you had a right and title given you unto all the ordinances, *Jus ad rem*, though not *in re;* they are your Father's plate, and as a child you may drink out of your Father's plate. That day thou wert converted and brought home to God, thou hadst a special right and title given thee

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unto all the creatures: you may look up to heaven and see the stars, and say, these are my Father's candles; and when you hear the thunder, you may say, this is my Father's voice; and when you see the sea, you may say, this is my Father's fish-pond; and when you see the godly men of the world, you may say, these are my Father's children; and when you see wicked men, you may say, these are my Father's dish-clouts to make his children clean; and when you consider of the devils, you may say, these are my Father's hangmen, his executioners; and when you see the gold, and riches, and wealth of the world, you may say, this is my Father's dung-hill. I say, that day thou art converted and brought home to God, God doth great things for you in that moment. Now the more that you consider what great things God hath done for you, the more your heart is engaged to God; and the more your heart is engaged, the more willing and able you will be to suffer.

If you would strengthen your faith to suffer great and hard things, study much the book of the Revelation, which is a standing cordial for the relief of the saints, in suffering in antichristian times; and study and read and commend to your children, the Book of Martyrs, where you have examples to the life of the people of God, dying for the faith: but above all things, study much the sufferings of Christ. Faith, true saving faith, it loves to dwell in the wounds of Christ; and believe it, the sight of a suffering Christ will teach one to suffer; nothing like it: the example of Christ, especially the sight of Christ's sufferings, will not only teach you to suffer, but will sanctify your heart by the suffering, and will provoke you to suffer. What, shall the Lord Christ suffer such great things for me, and shall I suffer nothing for him? Study the sufferings of Christ.

If you would so strengthen your faith as you may be able to suffer hard things, consider much and frequently, the great gains of suffering, possess your heart therewithal. Beloved, suffering times are gaining times; and if your heart and mind were but possessed with that truth, it would not be a hard thing to suffer hard things, and that by faith: I shall therefore spend a little time to make out this, for the strengthening of your faith, that suffering times are gaining times.

Suffering times are teaching times; "Blessed is the man

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whom thou chastisest, correctest and teachest out of thy law: *Schola crucis, schola lucis:* the cross is God's free school, where we learn much: suffering times are teaching times.

As suffering times are teaching times, so suffering times are sin-discovering times; afflictions recal sins past, and prevent sin to come; afflictions shew us the emptiness of the creature, the fulness of God, the vileness of sin. When Adonibezek had his thumbs and toes cut off, he could remember his own sin. You see how it is in winter, when the leaves are off the hedges, you can see where the birds' nests were; when the leaves were on in summer time, you could not see those nests: and so in prosperous times men do not see the nests of their hearts and lives; but when their leaves are off, then their nests are seen. Suffering times are sin-discovering times.

As suffering times are sin-discovering times; so suffering times are self-bethinking times. You see many a man run on in the day of his prosperity, and never bethinks himself. When the prodigal was pinched, then he bethought himself; and Manasses in prison, then he bethought himself: and saith Solomon, praying for the people in adversity, "If then they shall bethink themselves." There is many a man that, I may say, doth owe his conversion to his affliction, and can say, If I had not been afflicted, I had never been converted. Suffering times, are self-bethinking times.

As suffering times are self-bethinking times: so suffering times are fruitful and growing times: "Every branch in me he pruneth, that it may bring forth more fruit." Suffering times, then are growing times.

As suffering times are growing times; so suffering times are truth-advancing times: in the time of prosperity we lose truth, in the time of adversity we find truth and bear our testimony for truth, then truth is advanced. It is a good observation that Marloret hath upon Dan. viii. to shew that truths were advanced by suffering; verse 11., it is said of the little horn, "He hath magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down: and an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground, and it prac-

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tised, and prospered:" that is, saith he, not the horn, as it is ordinarily carried; for it is in the feminine gender, which only can relate to the word truth, not to the horn; he cast down the truth, and the truth practised and prevailed. So that suffering times are truth-advancing times.

As suffering times are truth-advancing times: so suffering times are uniting times: in times of prosperity, professors they wrangle, fall out, divide; but when the shepherd's dog comes, then the sheep run together. Suffering times are uniting times.

As suffering times are uniting times; so suffering times are praying times; he that will not pray, we say, let him go to sea, there he will be sick, and that will make him pray, that is the meaning; "In their affliction they will seek me early." Suffering times are praying times.

As suffering times are praying times; so suffering times are soul-assuring times: there is many a man or woman goes up and down many years doubting, and hath no assurance; and when they grow sick, God doth send in his evidence for heaven by the hand of that sickness, and he hath assurance for heaven that never had it before: according to that in Hos. ii. 14., "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart." "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, because her iniquity is pardoned." When? In the day of her warfare: "for her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received double from the hand of the Lord." Suffering times are soul-assuring times.

As suffering times are soul-assuring times; so suffering times are weaning times: when this mustard is laid upon the breast of the world, then are we weaned. Suffering times are weaning times.

Suffering times are heavenly times and glorious times; when the world is most bitter, heaven tastes most sweet and glorious; for, saith the apostle, "then shall the Spirit of God and of glory rest upon you." When? In suffering times, when the people of the Lord doth suffer, the Spirit of glory shall rest upon them. Suffering times are glorious times. And if all these things be true, then surely you will say with me, suffering times are gaining times. And if you would but think of this, and possess your heart with it, you would be

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more willing and able to suffer. Christians, they boggle at sufferings and they startle at sufferings; what is the reason? they do not know the gains of suffering. But is this true, That suffering times are gaining times; that suffering times are teaching times; that suffering times are sin-discovering times; that suffering times are self-bethinking times; that suffering times are growing times; that suffering times are truth-advancing times; that suffering times are uniting times; that suffering times are praying times; that suffering times are soul-assuring times; that suffering times are weaning times; that suffering times are glorious times? then surely suffering times are gaining times. And if thou wouldest strengthen thy faith, christian, so as thou mayest be able to endure hard things, think upon this much, and press it upon thy own soul, carry this away with thee, if no more; suffering times are gaining times; Oh my soul, suffering times are gaining times: and thus you shall be able to hold out and suffer. And thus I have done with the main doctrine. There are two or three observations that lie about the words; I will only give you them and so conclude.

You may consider here, what the persons were that suffered hard things. The text saith, they were such of whom the world was not worthy. Then greatness of sufferings and afflictions, are no sufficient reason why you should doubt of God's love, or of your own everlasting condition. Here were very hard things that these believers suffered, and yet they were such of whom the world was not worthy. Shall I then doubt of my condition, or question God's love, because my afflictions are great? I must not. But you will say, My afflictions are very strange, and none like mine; one cannot hear of such an affliction as mine is, not in an age. And I pray, in your age, have you heard of a man or woman sawn asunder? Thus were these, of whom the world was not worthy. But my afflictions are thick, they come very thick. And so did their's here. But my afflictions are filled with temptations; I am not only afflicted, but I am tempted, and temptations grow upon mine afflictions. So it was with these here, they were tempted; not only afflicted, but tempted; and yet such of whom the world was not worthy. But my afflictions are such as make me unserviceable. So, in the eye of reason, these afflictions made these believers; they

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were whipped up and down like rogues. And I pray you tell me, who would ever have thought, in the eye of reason, that Paul's ministry should have done any great good, after he had been whipped up and down like a rogue? Yet Paul's ministry was blessed; and, though you think your afflictions make you unserviceable, if God call you to them, he will take care for your service. But my afflictions are such as find me all alone; I am afflicted and afflicted, a man or woman of affliction, and I have none to pity me. So it was here with some of these; they wandered in the wilderness, and they were in the caves and dens of the earth, and such of whom the world was not worthy. Possibly then, thy afflictions, man or woman, may be very great, and yet thou mayest be precious in the eyes of God, and such an one of whom the world is not worthy. And therefore now, if there be ever a man or woman here in all this congregation, that labours under any great burden; I say to that person, Question not thy condition, doubt not concerning God's love, because of the greatness of thy affliction; thy affliction may be very great, and yet thou mayest be a person of whom the world is not worthy in God's account. I will give you this parable, apply it yourself. Suppose you see a company of children playing together one while, and may be afterwards fighting; and then you see a man come and carry away one of these children, and he strikes him, but he lets the others alone, and he strikes them not; which of these children, will you say, this man is a father unto? Will ye not say, in all likelihood he is a father unto that child that he carries away and strikes. I leave you to apply it.

You may observe upon what account they suffer these hard and grievous things; upon the account, saith the text, of a better resurrection. Then what shall we say to those that would steal away from you the doctrine of the resurrection? It may be, men will not speak out here with you, but they have done it with us, and nibble at this doctrine. What shall we say to them? They are enemies to your faith, they are enemies to your great relief in suffering times, they are enemies to your good conscience; a good conscience is a great matter in suffering times. I remember a speech of a good minister, when he was silenced in the bishops' time, and had his living taken from him; Well, saith he, I praise

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the Lord, though I have lost my living, I have saved my conscience, and this conscience is a great matter in suffering times. Now by their having an expectance of a better resurrection, they refused the present deliverance, and so kept their conscience. Do there therefore come in men among you, to steal away this great doctrine of our resurrection? Avoid them, avoid them, that they may be ashamed; hold close to this doctrine. As you desire, christians, to have comfort in a rainy day, and a bottom for your faith in suffering times, hold fast this doctrine of the resurrection, and this doctrine that you have been instructed in from the word.

And so to end, ye may observe here, by what means they suffered these hard things, and that is, as you have heard, by faith. Surely then, it is no easy thing to believe, with this true, saving faith; a hard thing to believe. This true, saving faith, can do great things, and can suffer hard things. True, saving faith, will make it easy to do great things, and easy to suffer hard things; but it is hard to get this true, saving faith. You will say, If a man were in the sun, he might go round the world in a day; but it is hard to get into the sun. So this true, saving faith, will make a man to do great things, and to suffer hard things; but it is a hard thing to get it, and few there be that have it. We read of Elias, that when the Lord had given him a power to shut heaven, that it rained not for three years and a half, he went away and hid himself; they could find him before: ordinary men might be found; but Elias that did this great work, could not be found. So an ordinary faith may be found out; but this true, saving faith, that doth great things, and suffers hard things, is hardly to be found. There is a common faith that grows every where. As it is in your flowers and plants; ye have your field thyme, and your garden thyme; ye have your field rose, and your garden rose; your field rose grows every where, but your garden rose grows not every where. You have pebble stones every where, but diamonds are not to be found every where. So there is a pebble faith, and a field faith, an ordinary faith, and this you may have every where. But this diamond, this garden faith, to suffer hard things, it is hard to be found; few there be that have it, and therefore few can do great things for God, or suffer hard things from

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men. Wherefore, beloved in the Lord, give me leave to end with this exhortation, to beseech you in Christ Jesus to get this faith; above all getting, get this faith; you that have not this true, saving faith, get it. Some there be here, it may be, that have faith good enough to swear by, but not faith good enough to live by; true, saving faith, a believer can live by, but he cannot swear by it. A true believer is very sensible of his unbelief: saith he, There was never a more unbelieving heart than mine; I think there is not a man or woman in the world, is troubled with such an unbelieving heart as I. True, saving faith, is sensible of unbelief; and therefore you that have not this true, saving faith, labour to get it; above all, get it. Get this true, saving faith; and you that have this true, saving faith, improve it, use it, do great things for God, and suffer hard things from man. Yea, certainly, if you have this true, saving faith, you will be able to do great things for God, and to suffer very hard things from man: for that is the doctrine at this time, True, saving faith, can and will suffer very hard things.

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THE FREENESS OF THE

GRACE AND LOVE OF GOD

TO BELIEVERS DISCOVERED,

IN REFERENCE TO

1.—THEIR SERVICES AND SUFFERINGS. 2.—THEIR CONSOLATIONS. 3.—THEIR SALVATION AND ETERNAL GLORY.

TOGETHER WITH

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE FEAR OF GOD. THE GOODNESS AND PLEASANTNESS OF BROTHERLY LOVE. THE WISDOM OF HEARING THE VOICE OF THE ROD. REPENTANCE THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT JUDGMENTS.

IN SEVEN SERMONS.

1671.

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TO THE READER.

THE labours of this Reverend Author (now with God) both in print and in preaching, have already praised him in the gate, and make his name and memory still remain and continue like a precious ointment, notwithstanding the vain endeavours of some, to make both himself and writings ridiculous; in which kind, though they may be abundantly repayed, since a late Author makes some on all sides guilty of the like; yet there is cause to fear (whatsoever innocent design may be pretended by those *witty men*) that religion itself may be contemned and slighted by such practices.

It is hoped that these Sermons will give no occasion for such cavils. but that they may be of use to some persons, to direct and confirm them in the good old ways of God, though they may want much of those advantages, which it may be the Author's own hand would have bestowed upon them. And upon that account the reader is desired not to be offended, though some things may not be so exact or plain as might be wished, nor to impute it to the Author in the least, but to look upon it only as the fault of the transcriber or publisher.

Yet hoping that notwithstanding these disadvantages, some may (through the blessing of God) reap profit and benefit by them, they are here published and submitted to the judgment of the candid reader.

J. O.

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ON THE

FREENESS OF THE GRACE AND LOVE OF GOD.

SERMON I.

" Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called but few chosen."—MATT. XX. 15, 16.

I DO intend, God willing, to shew you the freeness of the grace of God in reference to men's employments and sufferings, and therefore have made choice of this scripture, wherein you have the parable of certain labourers in the vineyard; the parable is propounded and applied; propounded from verse 1 to verse 16: " For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard, and when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard; and he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the market-place; and he said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you, and they went their way; and again he went about the sixth hour, and the ninth hour, and did likewise; and about the eleventh hour he went out and saw others idle, and he said unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle? and they said unto him, Because no man hath hired us: he said unto them, Go you also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall you receive. So when even was come, the Lord said unto his steward of the vineyard, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first; and when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny, but when the first came they supposed that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny, and when they had received it, they murmured

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against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burthen and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto the first. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thy eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; because many are called, but few chosen."

And thus far the parable goes, to shew that all is of free grace, both for service and for suffering. Now if you mind the 1st verse of the parable, you will find it brought in with a, *for*: "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man," &c. The former chapter saith, "For we have forsaken all to follow thee, and what shall we have? But Jesus saith, He that hath forsaken father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands for my sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and inherit eternal life; and they that are last shall be first, and the first shall be last."

Thus shall it be in suffering, many that are first shall be last; and so it shall be in service, in employment, and in labour. For after he had spoken this parable of the labourers, he concludes, "the last shall be first, and the first last;" concluding for suffering and for service: and he gives the reason of it from our election; "For many are called but few chosen:" and shews the grounds of it, that it is of free grace; "The first shall be last, and the last first." So that as to service and as to suffering, all is of free grace. Now take these words as they are in relation to the former, and they will afford us this doctrine:

That there is much of the freeness of the grace of God laid out both in our services and sufferings.

Free grace in the matter of our services and labour, and free grace in the matter of our sufferings: "The first shall be last, and the last first; for many shall be called, but few chosen."

For the prosecution of this doctrine, I shall

First, labour to shew you, That it is a great mercy to be used for God, and by God, either in a way of service or suffering for his name.

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Secondly, That there are some that God doth especially single out to serve him, or to suffer for him.

Thirdly, That it is the free grace of God that one serves above another.

Fourthly, I shall shew wherein this free grace of God doth appear or shine forth in the matter of our employment and sufferings.

Fifthly, I shall shew why God will order and dispose of our services and sufferings in the way of free grace or free love.

First, I say, It is a great mercy to be used for God, or by God in the matter of service or sufferings, it is a great mercy to be employed in any work for God. For,

1. The more serviceable any man or woman is for God, the more they honour God; and the more they honour God, the more will God honour them. When I testify of any excellency in God, then I honour God; when God testifies of any honour in me, then God honours me; as now when God calls me to any service, then God testifies an excellency in me, then God honours me. When a governor puts any honour upon a common soldier, he calls him forth to special service; so it is an honour for a man to be serviceable to God. This was the honour of Moses; "Moses, the servant of the Lord." And when the Holy Ghost puts an honour upon David, he says, "The Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord." Not, The Psalm of David, the king of Israel; no, The Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord. So in the New Testament, this was Paul's honour; "Paul, the servant of the Lord." Now is it not a great honour to honour God, and to be owned by God? Thus it is with them that serve the Lord.

2. The more serviceable any man is for God in his generation, the more apt God is to accept of his work, though there be failings in the work. Observe what great failings there was in Aaron, yet God accepted of the work.

3. The more serviceable any man is whilst he lives, the more comfortably he will die, when he comes to die. What is a man's comfort upon his death bed, but that according to his measure he hath served God? Saith Christ, "Glorify me, O Father, for I have done the work that thou hast sent me to do." And so it is a man's comfort to do the work that

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God gives him to do; yea it will be his comfort at the day of death.

4. The more serviceable any man is whilst he lives, the more he shall speak when he is dead; there are them that being dead yet speak. Why what speaks Abel, but faith, good works, good examples? He offered a better sacrifice than Cain; he was truly serviceable to God in his day, and now he speaks when he is dead. Thus Abel did, and thus it is with a serviceable man. Look how it is with a wicked man that is serviceable to the devil, and that writes wicked and wanton books that speak when he is dead; so is it with a man that is serviceable unto God. This honour is in the service of God above all others: and, to say no more, this is the thing that is desired more in some respects than the enjoyment of heaven: "I desire (saith the apostle) to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all; yet nevertheless, for your sakes, and the service of the churches, I desire to live." So that I say, in one respect, this is more desirable than heaven; for no such work is to be done in heaven. And is it not a great matter, very great to be serviceable unto God, to be used and employed by God either in service or suffering?

As it is a great mercy to serve for God, so is it not a great mercy to suffer for God; to be called out to suffer for the name of Christ? for saith the former chapter, "We have forsaken father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands for the sake of Christ; but saith Christ, He that forsakes so much for me, shall receive a hundred fold, and eternal life; yea, he that suffers for me shall reign with me." You carry a burthen, but Christ carries the heavy end, and you have communion with Christ also thereby; and thereby, also, your heart shall be filled with comfort, yea, even the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God dwells in every believer; and that man that suffers for God, the Spirit of God rests upon him as the dove rested upon the earth. And so saith Peter; "The Spirit of God and of glory resteth in you." A man is never more glorified than when he suffers for God. Remember that. When our Saviour Christ was upon the cross, he was then glorious before the eyes of heaven, and never more glorious than then, for

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"now is the Son of man glorified:" so may you say when in sufferings, Now am I glorified. Oh, the glory of a christian! Nay, says the martyr when going to the stake, Now I begin to be a christian. And thereby he is assured of eternal life and salvation. "Our present light afflictions (saith the apostle) work an eternal and exceeding weight of glory." And says our Saviour, "If ye be reviled and reproached for my sake, happy are you." And if you look into Phil. i. 28, you will find that sufferings are an evidence to us. Thus now you see, it is a mercy, yea, a great mercy to suffer for the name of Christ. That is the first thing.

Secondly: But then there are some that God doth graciously single out to service, or to suffer for him; this honour all the saints have not, but some God doth graciously single out not only to service, but to suffer for him. Now there is a providential service, and there is a mercenary service; there is a judicial service, and a gracious service; some that God doth single out graciously: possibly a man may be providentially used in the service of God; thus Naaman had a servant in his house that was providentially made use of for his conversion. So I say, a man may be made use of providentially, and also mercenarily and judicially. So the devils have been; "Whom shall I send to be a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets? Send me; and he went." This is a judicial service; and thus the devils do serve for wages; and them also that are the instruments of the devil. Persecutors are judicial servers; they are them that make clean the dishes. So that I say, there are them that may serve God providentially, mercenarily and judicially. Providentially, and so all the creatures serve him. Mercenarily, so they served him that said, "Lord, Lord, have we not done many wondrous works, yet Christ says he never knew them, depart from me." And then there is a judicial service, as when God gave license and power to destroy the ten tribes: but then, as there is a providential service, a mercenary service, and a judicial service, so there is also a gracious service; there are some that God doth graciously single out to serve him and to serve him in suffering for him. Did not God graciously single out Caleb to serve him? For it is said, "he followed God fully." And did not God in the New Testament single out Paul? "Go thy way to Ananias.

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And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said, Arise, go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do," Acts ix. 6. So I say, God doth graciously single out some not only to serve him, but to suffer for him.

Thirdly, What is it that makes the difference, that some are employed in the work and service of God, when others are not? It is only the free grace of God. It may be, you may think it is from men, that the providential hand doth fall upon one more than upon another; or that it is the will of men to single out whom they will for sufferings; but it is only the free grace of God. Look, what the sovereignty of God doth in a way of judgment and affliction, that, the free grace and love of God doth in a way of mercy. As now, suppose two men be together in a transgression, one is singled out to judgment, the other is not. Why? The sovereignty of God orders it so. "Think ye that they on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were greater sinners than others." No. A man may be wrapt up in great afflictions and calamities as Job was; and why so? It is the sovereignty of God: I will do what I will with my own. So look, what God's sovereignty doth in a way of judgment, the same the free grace of God doth in a way of mercy. Oh, is it not a great mercy to be singled out to suffer for the name of Christ, Phil. i. 29, "Unto you it is given not only to believe, but to suffer for Christ." So I say, it is not only to believe, but to suffer; and so God doth graciously choose some and not others for this great work.

Fourthly, But wherein doth the free grace of God shine forth and appear in the matter of our services and sufferings?

I answer, In many things: will you begin with your own employments? What is the reason one man is called forth to an employment, and not another? It is only the free grace of God. What is the reason one man hath success in a work, and not another? It is only the free grace of God. But to clear it the more unto you; the more unlikely any person is to serve or suffer for God, the more the free grace of God shines forth in that person. Now who are those that God doth generally make use of in his service, but those that are the most unlikeliest persons? As now will you instance

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in matter of men's places, estates, callings; there were two servants concerned in the conversion of Naaman; the servant of the prophet, and Naaman's own servant. Who is the most likely now? Certainly the servant of the prophet; yet you see the other doth it: so that I say, the unlikeliest oftentimes God makes use of, which is to shew forth the freeness of his grace: will you instance in the matter of ability as to the ministry; who more unfit and unlikely to be used in the gospel, than a company of fishermen, poor fishermen? for it is said, they perceived they were unlearned, and yet you find them made use of by our Saviour for the promulgation of the gospel. Will you instance in the matter of free grace? Who was so commended as Nathaniel that came to Christ? "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Who more unlikely to be used in God's service than Paul? Was it likely Paul should bring any honour to God, who was whipt and scourged up and down town like a malefactor? yet this man preached: and do you think he was like to do any good by his preaching? yet you find it is said, "He did more than they all;" and God blessed his ministry, and he converted the gentiles. Why is this but to shew that God will make use of them that are most unlikely to do him service: "For they that are first shall be last;" and this only to shew the freeness of his grace.

But wherein doth the grace of God appear as to our sufferings? for the great thing is to stand our ground: to this I answer;

Is it not a great mercy, that the great God of heaven and earth should call us worms to bear witness to his name, his great name, yea, to suffer for it?

Is it not a great mercy and favour, that God will take notice of all the injuries that are done unto them that suffer for him, as done unto himself? "I know thy works," saith God; do men jeer thee and reproach thee for the sake of Christ? then happy art thou. What wrong is done unto them that suffer for God, he takes it as done unto himself: so that I say, it is a great mercy and favour, that the God of heaven should take those injuries as done unto himself, that are done unto us. Nay, saith God, "I will give you a mouth, and tell you what you shall speak when you come be-

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fore men." "Take no thought for what you shall speak, for it shall be given you."

Is it not a great mercy, that your hearts shall be filled with joy in the midst of sufferings? "They went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer."

Is it not a great mercy, that some shall stand, that are likeliest to fall, when others fall, that were likely to stand?

Is it not a great mercy, that those whom the adversaries think shall dishonour and mar the work of God, that they should bring more honour to God, and suffer more powerfully and strongly for him than others, and that they should be used most for God?

Is it not a great mercy, that when God seems to have most displeasure against us, his love should be then most set upon us, as it is in sufferings? Who would but think, that when we are given into the hands of wicked men, it is from the displeasure of God against us, when yet it is from the free grace and great love of God unto us?

Is it not a great mercy to consider, that what is our greatest misery *seemingly*, that that should contribute to our greatest mercy? Thus it is in our sufferings for the name of God: you see what great and wondrous things were done by the death of Christ; so also what wonders were done by Joseph in Egypt when he was sold thither by the maliciousness of his brethren; it is the way of God unto his people that the more others work to do them *harm*, the more God doth order it to prove for their *good*; which is only from the free grace, love, and favour of God. We never did any work yet, but free grace paid us for it: even the work of suffering, God pays us for that: he was a preacher to day, yet carried to prison, that paid him for it. Yea, christians are paid for the work they never did: and what is the reason of it, but only the free grace of God. Thus you see wherein the free grace of God appears and shines forth.

Fifthly. Why will God carry on the work of our services and sufferings in the way of free grace? Why, God will order our employments and sufferings in a way of free grace that we may not be proud of them; we are apt to be proud of our employments and sufferings, and therefore God will carry on his work so, as that he may keep us from the sin of pride and haughtiness, when we shall con-

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sider it is the free grace of God to single us out to service or sufferings. Why should we be proud? God loves to confound the wicked and ungodly in the world by making those that are the most unlikely to be serviceable to himself; and by ordering their services and sufferings in a way of free grace. This God doth to confound the wisdom and reason of worldly men. "Many are called, but few chosen." God hath set the weak to confound the strong. Again, God doth dispose of his work in a way of free grace, that none may be discouraged from his service, or suffering for him. If none but great and mighty and holy men were to be used in God's service, then the weak would be discouraged and despised, and we should be ready to say, I am not worthy. Now God doth so order and dispose of his work, as not to discourage the weak, but to give encouragement to all. Well then if so, a word for application. Is this a truth that we have heard, that all that God doth either as to the ordering of our services or sufferings is in a way of free grace? What have we then to say, but as Job, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord?" You say, that God chooses whom he pleases to serve him, or to suffer for him; and that it is out of free grace: if so, why should not *all* suffer? But you hear it is not all but some, that God doth graciously single out to suffer for himself.

But here some may say, I am weak, and do not any work for God.

But give me leave: is family work nothing? The apostle insists much upon that in his epistles, he calls much upon parents, children, masters and all to do their duty. Reformation work is a great work, or else the apostle would never have spoken so much of it, and exhorted so much to it.

Is it nothing to do the work of your generation; to do the work that is suitable unto your condition? All men are not called to all works: there is a peculiar work to every man. Now is comforting work nothing? Is supporting work nothing? Is relieving work nothing? This comforting work it is angelical work. Is it nothing to improve the talent that God hath given thee? This will be the great question at the day of judgment, Faithful or not faithful? There are none but have talents more or less, which they must then answer for.

But you may be ready to say, I have no work. That is a

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mistake; for there are none but have work: therefore look unto that which is your work.

But you may say again, Though I have work and service, yet my service may be a judicial service, or a mercenary service, or a providential service: now how shall I distinguish my service, whether it be a providential, a judicial, a mercenary service, or whether God hath graciously singled me out to serve him in a way of free grace and love?

In answer to this, take these two or three things.

1. If it be a work or service given you by free grace, then God will lead you more and more, and bring you to be acquainted with the design of his work. When Peter was called to open the door of the temple, at first he did not know the design, but afterwards he was told it. So thus it is with thee: if God do call thee to work, he will acquaint thee with the design of the work.

2. If you serve God in a way of free grace, then you will be contented with your work: yea, you will be contented to be used for God, to be laid out for God, you will say, I am contented, because God hath called me.

3. When God doth make use of a man in a way of free grace, then that man doth not make any great bargains for himself: they that serve God any other way, will make great bargains for themselves, make use of his service to increase their estates: but now they that serve God out in a way of free grace, will not do so. Therefore now you that are at work, do you pocket up at work? Do you make great bargains for yourselves? If so, this is no free grace work.

But you will say, I am afraid I do not serve God in a way of free grace, because I have no success in my work. But you may observe in the scripture, that sometimes a man may be called to work by free grace, and may have success at the beginning as Joseph had many years, and yet the success may leave him.

As now there are them that preach many years, and never convert one soul, yet this should not discourage them; for free grace may call you to a work, and yet you may not find that success in it which you expected.

But then again, here is the great question yet behind; suppose God doth deal with the children of men in a way of free grace and love, then what is my duty, and what shall I

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do, that I may so serve and suffer, as to serve and suffer under the conduct of free grace?

In answer to this, you may take in these following particulars.

If you would serve and suffer under the conduct of free grace, then serve your call fully; and go to the utmost of the thing called unto, leaving God to do his work: do your work to the utmost, and leave God to do his. When God called Joshua to do a work fully and he did it, God shewed mercy to him, and to his posterity after him: and so when Jehu was called to a work, and he did it by halves, God blew upon him, and upon his posterity after him. Therefore I say, when God calls us to a work, let us do our work fully, and leave God to do his work.

If you would serve God under the conduct of free grace, then when you find any warmth or heat upon your affections, take the hint of this opportunity for the doing of that work God calls you to.

If you would serve God under the conduct of free grace, then do not envy others that are more employed, that have better success, and are better paid than yourselves: observe how it is with two servants in a great shop, the one at one end, the other at the other end; the one may take more money than the other, yet they do not envy one another: and why? but because they both serve one master. Thus it should be with the saints and servants of God, they all serve one Master; and therefore one should not envy another because he is more employed or hath better success.

If you would serve God under the conduct of free grace, then be sure you do not serve for wages; mercenary in your service. It becomes those that serve under free love to be very free in their service: saith one, I have been wrought upon by my neighbour, and ever since I have endeavoured to do him good. Now it is God that hath wrought upon us by his free grace; and if so, let us freely serve him and labour to do him all the honour we can. When the prodigal first thought of returning home unto his father's house, he saith first, "Let my father make me as one of his hired servants." This was a legal expression; I will be hired, "Let him make me as one of his hired servants;" but when he saw his father's love he talked no more of his hired service. Inheritance is

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not of the bond-woman but of the free. I do confess, indeed, it is not unlawful to look unto the recompence of reward; yea, it is lawful for us to do it. But now do you desire to serve under the conduct of free grace, then look not for wages; do not do as an hireling, as the labourers of the vineyard: no, do it freely in a way of love, thankfulness and believing.

If you would serve under the conduct of divine love, then serve God with fear upon the account of his goodness "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If you do serve and work, then fear upon the account of God's goodness to you.

And to conclude this application. If you would serve as those that serve under the conduct of free grace and love, then have a care that in all your workings you depend upon nothing but the free grace of God in reference to your call; and if so, why then should you not willingly suffer for the name of Christ? Would you know whether you are called to suffer? why this is a certain rule, when the case is so with you, that you must either suffer or sin.

But then a second word of application may be this. Is it so, that so much of the free grace is laid out in reference to our services and sufferings? then let us freely and willingly suffer for the name and cause of Christ.

Is it so, that so much of the free grace of God is laid out in reference to our services and sufferings? then why should we not be contented with our sufferings; not only contented in suffering, or contented upon suffering, but contented with sufferings. Our Saviour tells us, that "they that will be his disciples, must deny themselves, take up the cross and follow him." Not only take up the cross, but follow him; yea, and deny themselves. Some will deny themselves in this or that, but will not take up the cross; but saith our Saviour, "If any man will follow me, let him take up the cross and follow me." Thus, now, if Christ calls us to suffer, let us suffer freely, because his grace is free.

If you would serve under the conduct of free grace, then take heed of any legal *therefore* upon your sufferings, Matt. ix. 27, "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have,

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therefore?" This was a legal *therefore.* Christ answered and said, "You shall have your reward; but many that are first shall be last, and the last first." The only way to take away this legal *therefore,* is to look more and more upon the free grace of God, either in your services or sufferings for him; for this all must do, that either serve God or suffer for him, under the conduct of free grace. Do you desire to serve God either as to employments or sufferings under the conduct of free grace and love? then look more and more upon his free grace, and depend upon it in reference to your call, in reference to your assistance, in reference to your dependence, and in reference to your reward, seeing all is of free grace, bless the name of the Lord. Thus it is both in suffering work and in service, the first shall be last, and the last first.

Therefore as you would desire to serve or suffer under the conduct of free grace, rejoice and bless God for his free grace; remember this, that whether we serve or suffer it is of free grace.

Thus you see how the free grace of God shines forth both in our services and sufferings. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own: is thine eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last, because many are called, but few chosen."

SERMON II.

"*Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.*"—3 THESS. II. 16, 17.

HAVING already treated of the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our employments and sufferings, I do intend to shew you, also, the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our comforts and consolations; and this text, you see, saith, God hath given us "everlasting consolation," and tells us further, that God hath given us this everlasting consolation "through grace."

Therefore, without any further explication, you see that

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free love is written upon all our spiritual comforts. For what is more free than gift? "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, hath given us everlasting consolation and hope through grace." Therefore it is by the grace, by the free grace of God that we are truly comforted.

There is much of the freeness of God's grace and love laid out in our spiritual comforts and consolations.

For the opening of this argument.

First, I shall shew you that it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

Secondly, That it is possible for God's own people to live a great while without any considerable comfort.

Thirdly, That it is not in the power of any creature, or any thing on this side God or Christ, to comfort a poor, distressed, drooping soul.

Fourthly, That when God doth give or bestow comfort upon any, he gives and bestows it in a way of free grace.

Fifthly, To shew wherein the grace and love of God is manifested in the matter of our spiritual comforts.

Sixthly, Why God will deal with us in the way of free grace and love in the matter of our comforts.

Seventhly, When a man may be truly said to be comforted in a way of free grace and love.

Eighthly, What a poor drooping soul must do, that he may be truly comforted in a way of free love; and in case he be so comforted, what returns he should make. Of these in order.

First, I say it is a great mercy to be truly comforted; for it is a promised mercy, and promised mercies are no small mercies: now this is a mercy promised, Matt. v. 4, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

As this is a mercy promised, so it it is the proper birth, fruit, and effect of the Holy Ghost. Gal. v. 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Joy and peace are the proper fruits of the Holy Ghost, and therefore no small mercies.

As this comfort is the proper birth, fruit, and effect of the Holy Ghost, so it is the main part of the kingdom of God. Rom. xiv. 17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

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It is a main part in the kingdom of God, and if so, no small matter.

This comfort is reward also, as well as a main part of the kingdom of God. Comfort and joy in the Holy Ghost is both duty and reward; so it is promised in the forementioned scripture, Matt. v., "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" and if so, then surely it is no small thing.

As it is duty and reward, so it is that grace whereby you are enabled to read your other graces. When a man is under great temptations, sorrows and afflictions, it is a hard thing to read his graces; but now this helps us to read our graces. Some will say they cannot read their graces, they lie at the bottom. As to explain it, take this plain comparison: there are many fishes in a fish-pond, but now in rainy and foul weather the fish lie all at the bottom, and are not to be seen; but in fair weather the fish swim and are visible: so if it be foul weather upon a soul, if it be dark and gloomy weather, the soul cannot read his graces; but now when God shines upon him, then he is enabled to read them, yea, though his graces lie at the bottom, as I may say, yet the poor soul is able to read them. And if it be so, it is no small thing; it is no small matter to read our graces, our other graces.

As it is that grace whereby you are enabled to read your other graces, so it is that whereby you joy in all good things. Grief and sorrow straiten the soul, straiten the heart; but joy and comfort dilate the soul, widen and open the heart: "I will run in the way of thy commandment, when thou shalt enlarge my heart," Psalm cxix. 32.

As by this grace you are enabled to joy in all good things; so it is also that grace whereby you are enabled to bear up against every evil thing, to bear up under all afflictions. Are you reproached? By this comfort you are enabled to bear up against reproaches; for saith the apostle Peter, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you." Are you reproached? Comfort will turn that to your benefit and blessing. Are you persecuted? "Blessed are you when men shall revile and persecute you, rejoice," &c. Are you not only persecuted, but beaten too? Comfort will bear

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up your hearts under all stripes and afflictions, for we find Paul and Silas sung in the stocks. Well but this is not all.

This is the grace that will strengthen and establish you in the good ways of God. Mark how they go together in 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." Comfort and establishment go together; and if it be so, it is no small matter.

This is that grace that will give a beauty and lustre to your profession. The comforted christian is the truly beautiful christian. If a man have never so much beauty in his face, yet if his face be wrinkled with grief and blubbered with tears, the beauty of his face is not seen; but when joy and comfort comes, that wipes off all, and his beauty then is seen. So here, comfort doth not only take away reproach from your profession, but it gives a lustre, a beauty to your profession., The comforted christian, I say, is the truly beautiful christian; and if so, surely it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

That is the first thing in general, that it is a great mercy to be truly comforted.

Secondly, As it is a great mercy to be truly comforted, so it is possible for God's own servants and dearest children to live a long time without any considerable comfort, any fundamental comfort; their hearts may faint. "My heart and my soul fainteth," saith the Psalmist; and you know how it was with Daniel, x. 17. You may see how he was bowed down, he complains there was no strength remained in him, until there came one and touched him, and set him upon his legs again. A good man may faint and want comfort, and all the former comforts that he hath had may be eclipsed. "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation," Psalm li. 12, saith David; his glory and comfort was eclipsed. Yea, possibly a gracious soul may live a long time without comfort. "How long wilt thou forget, yea, forget me, O Lord; what, for ever?" Psalm xiii. 1. I say a man may live a long time without any considerable comfort. There is a time when God will try his people, and see whether they will take comfort from his hand or from another hand; it may be it

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may be so with you sometimes, God may try whether you will wait upon him, and believe in him, and rest upon him for comfort.

Thirdly, As a man may live long without comfort, so it is not in the power of any thing, on this side God and Christ, to give comfort to a poor drooping soul. This is the Lord's prerogative: "I am the Lord that comforteth." This is his name: "Father of mercies, and God of all comfort and consolation." And 2 Cor. vii. 6, "Nevertheless God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us," &c. It is God's prerogative only to do it; comforting work is creation work; it is not in the power of the creature, but of the Creator. Isaiah lvii. 19: "I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him." It is God's work to comfort, and not in the power of any other; man may be instrumental to comfort, but it is none but God alone that can do the work.

But some may object and say, Can none but God alone comfort?

No, none but God alone can rate off Satan. If a great dog or mastiff be worrying a child or a sheep, a stranger comes and strikes him and calls him off, but the dog takes no notice of him; but when the master comes he rates him off presently: none but the master can do it. So here it is none but God that can rate off Satan from worrying the poor drooping soul, when it is under temptation, none but God the master. It is not in the power of any creature, but in the power of God alone; it is in the power of none but the third person in the Trinity, the Spirit of God. What needed the third person in the Trinity to have come into the world, as he is now, if any other could comfort? As none can redeem but Christ, the second person of the Trinity, because the second person came from heaven on purpose to redeem; so none can comfort but God, and his Spirit, because the third person came from heaven to do it. There is none but God alone that can comfort a poor soul.

That is the third particular.

Fourthly, When God doth bestow comfort, he bestows it and gives it in a way of free grace, in a way of free love and grace. See but how they go together in the text, "Who

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nath given us everlasting consolation through grace." I will give you one scripture more to prove it, and consider it well, Job xxxiii.; you have there the draught of a man's conversion. First he goes on in his sin; and all on a sudden God gives in a word to him, at verses 14, 15: "For God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not: in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." And then the soul is filled with horror of conscience, as in verse 19, "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain." And when God hath done thus, then he justifies him, and gives him faith, and shews him true righteousness, as in verse 23, "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness." This is justification, and when this is done, then the Lord comforts him, as in verse 25, "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth." You see God comforts him in a way of free love; and in verse 26, "He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy, for he will render unto man his righteousness." God comforts in a way of free love, he comforts how he pleaseth, and as far as he pleaseth; but whensoever he comforts, it is still I say in a way of free love. You may see it in Isa. lxv. 14: it is said, "Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." And thus also saith the Lord in the former verse, "Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed." God comforts whom he pleaseth and as far as he pleaseth, and it is all free, out of free love. John xiv. 20: "At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." And at verse 16, "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." This work of comforting is properly the work of the Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost breathes as the wind, where it listeth; and therefore I say, comforts whom and how he pleaseth, and all

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in a way of free love and free grace. This is the fourth particular.

Fifthly, Wherein is the love, the free love of God manifested to us in the matter of our comforts? I answer in many things.

I will pitch but upon three only.

1. The greater he is that giveth, and the greater the thing is that is given, and the lesser or meaner the person is that the thing is given unto, the more free is the love of him that gives and bestows the thing. Now this comfort and consolation is a great thing, it is a very great matter, it is a birth of the Holy Ghost. Is that a small thing? It is part of the kingdom of God. Is that a small matter? It is both duty and reward. Is that small? It is that which exceeds all the joy of the world. "Lift up the light of thy countenance upon me: thou hast put more gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their oil and their wine increased," Ps. iv. 7. Ask a poor drooping soul and he will tell you that it is a great thing, for it comes from a great God. Isa. lvii. 15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Unto that soul that trembles, unto that soul will God bring comfort and will be nigh unto him. Now if a prince should rise from his throne to come and help up a poor fallen cripple, would it not be looked upon as an act of very great favour. Yet thus God does when he comes to comfort, the great "high and lofty One" comes down from his throne, as it were to lift up a poor drooping soul. Oh, what free grace is this! But,

2. The more God doth cross hands, (understand me) the more I say that God doth cross hands in the matter of our comforts, the more doth the free grace of God appear in our comforts; when Jacob blessed Joseph's two children, "he crossed his hands, and he laid his right hand upon the younger, and his left hand upon the elder; Not so, father," says Joseph; now what doth this shew but only the freeness of his love; and so if God shall cross hands in the matter of our comfort, what doth this argue but the freeness of his

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love and grace; and God doth sometimes do thus when he comes to comfort, he doth cross hands. Sometimes two men have been in the same transgression, and the one hath been comforted and the other not; what shall we say of Peter and of Francis Spira. Spira having professed the truth, and being called to witness to it, did deny it; so did Peter, he denied Christ, yet Peter was comforted, but Spira never comforted, but lay despairing and roaring out to his death, "I am a reprobate, I am a reprobate, no hope for me, no hope for me;" Peter was comforted, Spira was never comforted. What do you think of David and Cain, Cain murders his brother Abel, a godly man; David murdered Uriah, a godly man too: Uriah had been with him in all his troubles, and was a very good man, but though David was an adulterer also, yet a messenger is sent to him that says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee:" but Cain was not comforted, but driven out from the presence of the Lord. So that I say there may be two in a transgression, and the one may be comforted and the other not. Look into the Scriptures and into your own experiences, and you will find great sinners comforted, and lesser sinners not comforted, and great sinners converted and comforted sooner than others. Zaccheus was a great sinner and yet was comforted; the jailor was a great sinner and yet comforted; and yet many that have walked very closely with God have not been comforted. Ps. lxxxviii. 15. Heman complains sadly in verse 14: "Lord, why castest thou off my soul, why hidest thou thy face from me: I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted;" and yet he walked close with God, as you may find in the former part of the Psalm. Yet we find sometimes, I say, the greatest sinners converted and soonest comforted. Now what is this but crossing of hands in the matter of our comforts, and this is only to shew forth the freeness of the grace of God; and the free grace and love of God is most abundantly, most eminently manifested to the soul by this crossing of hands.

3. The more unbelieving any man is that is comforted, the more doth the freeness of the grace of God appear. Dearly beloved brethren, it is with our consolation as it is with our justification and our sanctification; when God

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comes to justify a man he finds him ungodly; yet he justifies the ungodly, and not only the ungodly, but the unbelieving also: and therefore the Lord said, "Go and compel them to come in." They were unbelieving persons, yet God calls them. And so it is also in the matter of our sanctification; when God comes to sanctify men, he finds them unwilling to be sanctified: but as God justifies them though unwilling because he doth it freely, so he sanctifies them too, though unwilling, because he sanctifies freely. And so it is also in the matter of our comforts. When God comes to comfort he finds the soul unwilling many times. "My soul refused to be comforted," saith the Psalmist, Psalm lxxvii. 2. And so again, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," Psalm cxix. 49. I was unwilling, but thou causedst me to hope whether I would or no. When God comes to comfort, he doth it though men are unwilling to be comforted. It is very strange that it should be so, and yet such is the unbelief of men's hearts, that as before conversion they are unwilling to be turned, so after conversion they are unwilling to be comforted. Now this is that I say, that the more unwilling any man is to be comforted, yet if God doth comfort him, the more free doth the grace of God appear in it. God doth comfort though souls are unwilling. Oh, the freeness, the freeness of the grace of God in the matter of our comforts. Thus you see how and wherein the free grace of God appears and is manifested in our spiritual comforts and consolations. That is the fifth particular.

Sixthly, Why will God deal with us in a way of free grace in the matter of our comforts and consolations; would it not be better in a way of settlement, in a constant way, would not that be best? No, take notice of this, that there is no way to make a mercy sure like this. I know no mercy that is so sure as that which is wrought and given in a way of free grace and free love. They go together in the text: "Everlasting consolation through grace." The only way, I say, to make a thing sure, is to receive it in this way in which God gives it, that is in a way of free grace. Pray tell me, did not God choose David freely and his house. Yea, it was freely in opposition to the house of Saul, 2 Sam. vi. 21. Says David to Michal Saul's daughter, "It was before the Lord, which chose me

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before thy father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel," &c. God chose him freely also in opposition to his own brethren. And was not his house sure? The covenant was sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire." God hath made me his chosen, and his mercies to me are sure. God will deal with us in a way of free grace that our mercies may be sure. "By grace ye are saved;" and if so, what a comfort is it that God will so order and dispose of it, that we may be sure of it and depend upon it; for God will have us depend upon him for our spiritual comforts: and what will make us more depend upon him, than to know that he gives all in a way of free grace? We must depend upon God both for our spiritual and our outward comforts; seeing what he doth he doth freely, we must freely depend upon him for comfort. But,

Seventhly, When may a man be said to be truly comforted in a way of free grace? I cannot deny but I am comforted, saith a poor soul, but I know not whether it be in a way of free grace and free love: now how may I know that I am comforted in a way of free grace?

I shall speak to this negatively and affirmatively.

1. Negatively. There is a comfort that is the daughter of time. A man or woman is sorrowful, but time wears it out, time comforts them. This comfort that springs from and ariseth out of time, is not true comfort, neither is that man truly comforted by free grace. But when the soul is truly comforted in a way of free grace, then he is comforted by the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost bearing witness that he is the child of God.

There is a comfort that ariseth from the satisfaction of a natural conscience. A man knows by nature that there is a God, and that this God is to be prayed unto, and therefore he prays accordingly; and when he hath done, his natural conscience is satisfied, and he is then comforted: but now if a man's comfort arise only from this, from the satisfaction of a natural conscience, that man is not truly comforted; for he that is truly comforted, is comforted by joy in believing: "In whom believing, ye rejoice," Rom. xv. 13.

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There is a comfort that ariseth from a man's non-attendance to his own condition. Men may be comforted, why? because they never look into their condition, how it stands between God and their souls. There is a comfort arising not only from a man's conscience, but from the non-attendance to his own condition, and hereupon he is secure; but this is not the comfort that ariseth from free grace and free love.

There is a comfort that doth arise from the use of the creature. Men are troubled in their minds, and they run presently to the tavern, to their music or merry company to put it off, and so it may be are comforted; but if a man's comfort arise only from the creature, he is not truly comforted, not comforted with the comfort of free grace and love. He that is comforted in this way, it is but a diversion to him, and not true comfort. As straw when set on fire will make a flash and a flame, but black ashes remain behind; so when men are troubled, and they run to the tavern, or to music and merry company, all this is but a flash, black ashes remain behind. Provoked trouble will be angry trouble, and angry will be most troublesome; when men run to merriment to divert trouble, they provoke it.

There is a comfort that doth arise from the common work of the Holy Ghost: "Some who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and yet fall away," Heb. vi. 4. The false ground "received the word with joy." Now if a man's comfort ariseth from these common workings of the Holy Ghost, it is not true comfort; for he that is truly comforted, is comforted in a way of free love, his comfort is unspeakable. "Whom having not seen you love, in whom though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Thus you see, negatively, when a man is not truly comforted in these five particulars.—A man is not truly comforted from time, nor from the satisfaction of a natural conscience, nor from a non-attendance to his condition, nor from the use of the creature, nor lastly from the common workings of the Holy Ghost. But,

2. Affirmatively. We have heard when a man may be said not to be comforted. Now when may a man be said to be comforted, truly comforted in a way of free grace? Be-

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loved in the Lord, are you willing to have your comforts tried? False and counterfeit things do not love trial; now if you be willing to be tried, to have your comforts tried, it is a sign and a hope that your comforts may be true: but I shall not insist on this. There are two or three things I shall speak to here.

If you have been comforted by the word of promise set on upon your souls by God, then are you truly comforted in a way of love and free grace, for what is the promise but the word of grace. But some may say, I have had a promise, but I fear it may be from the devil, for the devil may bring a promise; did he not bring a promise unto Christ? Matt. iv. 6, saying, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up." This promise was brought to Christ by the devil, and it may be my promise may be handed to me by Satan, and set on upon my soul by him. But do but mark this, I will only say this one thing to thee, poor soul, to ease thee of this objection: If Satan bring a promise to you, it is to lead you into sin, to draw you into sin and to that which is evil; as this to Christ here, "He will give his angels charge concerning thee, cast thyself down." He brought a promise to do evil: "Cast thyself down." But now if God hand a promise to you, it is for your doing of good; therefore says Christ to Satan, "It is written:" I have a word and a promise too: "It is written thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The devil brought this that he might do evil, and God gave Christ a word to keep him from evil. And so when you are brought into temptations, great temptations, if you have a word of promise brought home to your hearts to bear you up under temptation, it is not the devil that gives it in to you, that hands it to you. No, for the devil is no friend to faith, no friend to stay you up, for the tempter will not act against the temptation. Saith Luther, Though the devil be magnipotent, yet he is not omnipotent; though he be mighty, yet he is not almighty. And therefore I say, if you have a promise come to you to help you to do good, it is not of Satan but of God; for he is almighty, he is able to comfort. That is the first.

Would you know whether you be comforted in a way of free grace and love, you may know it by the ebbing

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and flowing of your comforts, which will ebb and flow according to the cause. They say the marigold opens and shuts with the sun, when the sun shines it opens, when the sun withdraws it shuts, it opens and shuts according to the withdrawing and shining of the sun; and so if your comforts be true, the more the righteousness of Christ opens before you, the more the Sun of righteousness shines upon you, the more you will be comforted. If your comforts be true, the more the freeness of the love of God is opened to you, the more will the comfort of the soul be enlarged; if your comforts be true, the more God shines with his countenance, the more is the soul comforted. "Lord, (says David in Ps. iv. 6) lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, thou hast put more gladness in my heart than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Now according to the opening and shutting of these things, so will your comforts be. How is it therefore with you; is there any ebbing and flowing? How is the righteousness of Christ; how is the light of God's countenance discovered to you; are they laid open to you? Then are you truly comforted in a way of free grace and love. That is the second.

If you be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then your comforts are true friends to holiness of life. That comfort that is wrought by the grace of God without you, is the greatest friend to the grace of God within you, and to holiness in your lives. False comfort is a friend to sin, a neighbour, a guard to sin; but no friend to true and gracious comfort; yea, those that have this false comfort can endure sins against conscience. But now where there is true comfort, and comfort from the grace of God, there conscience is as the apple of the eye, and the man cannot endure the least sin, he cannot bear the least mote of sin to lie upon his conscience. How is it therefore with you; is your comfort a friend to holiness of life; and can you say, The more comforted I am, the more holy I am? Then you are truly comforted.

But suppose I want comfort now, and that I am one of a drooping, trembling spirit and of an afflicted heart; what shall I do that I may be comforted and comforted in a way of free grace? I answer:

Go away and be sensible of your unbelief; for it is want

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of believing that hinders our comfort, and when the Comforter comes, he will convince the world of sin and especially of unbelief. Would you then be comforted in a way of free love? Go then I say and be sensible of your unbelief, and be humbled for it.

Observe what those things are that hinder your spiritual comforts, and take heed of them. They are many. I will only name some of them. As,

Worldly fears and worldly delights; these are enemies to true comfort.

Sins against conscience: they that sin against knowledge, will hardly have peace of conscience; nay it is pity they should have peace, lest they be engaged and encouraged thereby to sin; those that sin against conscience will hardly have peace. Do you think to have the Spirit to be your friend whom you grieve so often? If then you would be truly comforted, you must have a great care of sinning against conscience and thereby grieving the Spirit, that "Spirit whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption," Ephes. iv. 30. Would you then be truly comforted? Observe I say these things that hinder your spiritual comfort; can you think that what you grieve most should comfort you most? Therefore as you expect true comfort, have a care of grieving the Spirit of God.

If at any time God make a tender of grace, or offer a word of comfort and peace to you; be sure you do not refuse it. We are apt to refuse to be comforted, but be sure you accept of it, especially in time of temptation.

Be sure you do not rest upon your own performances in reference to your comforts. Brethren and beloved, think on these things, and compare them with your own daily experiences. I say, if you would be truly comforted, do not rest on your own performances. As we are apt to rest upon our own righteousness in reference to our justification; so we are apt also to rest upon our own performances in reference to our comforts. Oh, take heed you do not go about to establish your own comforts upon the bottom of your own performances, for if you do, you will not submit to the consolations of God.

If you would be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then study much the freeness of the grace of God.

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What is the reason people are no more comforted? It is because they see no more of the grace of God, the free grace of God. The more you look into the riches and freeness of God's grace, the more you will be comforted.

If you want comfort at any time, walk graciously in the want of it. When you want comfort go to God and say: Lord, although I cannot see thee, yet will I serve thee; and although I cannot enjoy thee, yet I will obey thee; and although I cannot see thy face, yet I will follow after thee, if by any means I may obtain thee. Walk graciously in the want of your comforts.

Set yourself to rejoice in him that gives you comfort, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice," saith the apostle, Phil. iv. 4. He doth not only say, Humble yourself for sin; which is a duty and a great duty; but he saith "Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice in the Lord who gives you comfort freely. As much as you have been humbled for sin formerly, so much should you now rejoice that you have been comforted, and freely comforted by the grace of God; rejoice so much in the Lord of your comforts.

To name them only: If you would be comforted in a way of free grace and love, then be thankful for your comfort. He that is thankful for a little, shall have much; be thankful therefore to God for your comfort.

Would you be comforted in a way of free grace and love; then go to God for that comfort. Friends and beloved; God is willing, most willing to comfort; and, what will you not go to him? God is willing to make good his name and his title; now this is one of his titles, I am the Lord that comforteth. He is willing to do what Christ was sent to do; "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to comfort all that mourn," Isa. lxi. 2. Is not God willing to do it? He hath sent the Comforter also to comfort you, yea he hath given his ministers charge to comfort you: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," Isa. xl. 1; and are not you willing now to receive what God hath promised? "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you," John xiv. 15. You will be troubled and reason with yourselves, yet I will not leave you comfortless. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted,"

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Isa. lxvi. 13. Therefore now, oh, poor drooping soul, go to God, for he is willing to comfort thee, if thou be but willing to go to him. Only in your going to God observe these two or three directions.

1. When you go to God for comfort, go to the office which he hath set up for comfort, the office of the Holy Ghost.

2. When you go to God, shut your eyes, and cast yourself at an adventure upon the free grace of God.

3. In going to God for comfort you must stay God's leisure; some come and ask God, and because they do not receive an answer presently, they are gone; but be sure you do willingly stay God's leisure. Thus I say, would you have comfort? You must observe these things, to go to God's office, to shut your eyes, and to cast yourselves at adventure upon the free grace of God, and then you must stay God's leisure; thus doing you shall be truly comforted; and when you have obtained this comfort and are thus truly comforted, then take these few rules with you, and so I conclude.

1. Take as much pains to keep your comfort as ever you did to get it.

2. Labour more and more to increase it, for if it do not increase it will certainly decrease.

3. Be comfortable to, and comforting of others; for how do you know but that God hath comforted you, to this very end, that you might comfort others; Paul was so, and be sure to shew comfort for comfort's sake.

Brethren and beloved in the Lord, do not receive this grace in vain; but go, all you that have this comfort, and magnify the riches of God's grace, the freeness of the grace of God that hath comforted you, and say, What, such a one as I comforted! Others of thy children, Lord, have walked closely with thee, but I have walked loosely; and shall I be comforted and not they? Oh, what free grace is this! I have been a great sinner, Lord, and what, am I comforted? Oh, what free grace is this! There are some that have walked in the light, and they are now in darkness; but I have walked in the dark, and yet am now in the light; oh, what free grace is this! Go away, therefore, and magnify the riches of God's grace in the matter of your comforts.

Thus you have heard how the freeness of the grace of God

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is written upon all your comforts, your comforts and consolations are all deeply enamelled with the free grace of God; and that much of his free love is laid out in your comforts and consolations. And thus I conclude with the words of my text: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

SERMON III.

"For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."—EPH. II. 8.

IN the former exercise I have been shewing you the freeness of the love and grace of God in the matter of our comforts and divine consolations. I shall now, in the third place, shew you the freeness of the grace of God in reference to our salvation and eternal glory, and therefore follow these words which the apostle speaks at the latter end of verse 5, "By grace are ye saved;" and so you see the same in verse 8, "For by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

But why should he say the same words again in so short a a compass? Why, it was to shew, not only that his heart was full of the free grace and love of God, but to shew, also, that he thought he could never speak enough of it, and therefore he repeats it, "By grace ye are saved:" "For by grace are ye saved." That is to say, from first to last you are saved by the free grace and love of God.

From whence, then, I take up this doctrine:

That there is much of the free love and grace of God laid out in the matter of our salvation and eternal glory.

For the clearing of this point, I shall endeavour to shew you,

First, That it is a matter of infinite happiness and of great concernment to go to heaven and to be saved for ever.

Secondly, To shew you how this mercy is obtained, this

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mercy of salvation and eternal glory; I shall shew it is of free grace and free love.

Thirdly, I shall answer two objections.

Fourthly, I shall shew you wherein the free grace and love of God appears in the matter of our salvation.

Fifthly, Shew you why God chooseth to save the children of men in a way of free love and grace.

First, I shall speak a little by way of introduction: it is a great matter and of infinite concernment to be saved and to go to heaven for ever. For,

1. You are thereby saved from wrath to come. You count it here a great matter to be saved from the wrath of man, but it is a far greater mercy to be delivered from the wrath of devils, to be delivered from their fury and malice, and not to lie at their mercy to all eternity. Yea,

2. You shall be delivered from all sorrow, both inward and outward; and if so, how blessed and happy are you, for you shall die in the Lord: "And blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours," &c. Rev. xiv. 13. It is a mercy to have meat and drink, and a bed to lie on, but it is a greater mercy not to need them: in heaven you shall be freed from these needs and necessities. You walk here, but it is with a burden; you hear now, but it is with a burden; you repent now, but it it is with a burden: but in heaven you shall be freed, not only from the guilt of the neglect of duty, but from the burden of duty also; heaven knows of no duty that hath a burden with it. Thus you shall be freed. Again,

3. You shall not only be freed from these troubles, but you shall also be brought into a possession, into "an inheritance that is incorruptible, that fadeth not away;" where you shall enjoy the company of saints and angels, and that without suspicion or jealousy one of another. Here you have the company of saints, but either you suspect them or they you, either they are jealous of you or you of them; but heaven knows no suspicions, no jealousies; saints live there without suspicions.

4. If you go to heaven and be saved, you shall then be filled with glory. If you have but a little taste of glory here, you are ready to break under it, under a little glory; but the time will come when you shall be filled with glory, and your

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hearts shall bear up under it; your bodies shall be changed; "your vile bodies shall be changed, and made like unto Christ's glorious body;" you shall be filled with glory, soul and body both. Yea,

5. If you be saved, your graces shall be always in act, always in exercise; your understandings shall be fully enlightened, your difficulties shall be removed, and you shall see them all little and easy upon you, and your wills, hearts and affections shall be drawn out to God with infinite satisfaction and infinite delight: "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness," Psalm xvii. 15. All delight ariseth from enjoying things suitable: now what is more suitable for a rational creature than to enjoy his ends. When a husband hath been at sea from his wife half a year or a year, what joy it is to her to see him come home again. So for a poor soul to see Christ, what joy is it, after he hath withdrawn himself a great while? Here we have communion with Christ but in part, and interrupted; but then you shall be ever, for ever with the Lord, and have communion with him without interruption. Now we see joy and glory but darkly; and if there be so much sweetness to see Christ in a glass, oh, then, what sweetness will it be to see him face to face, and enjoy him for ever. And, to say no more,

6. If you be saved you shall have the knowledge of the continuance of this condition. Though a man's condition be never so happy in itself, yet if he think it will not continue, that man is unhappy in the midst of his happiness. This is the unhappiness of hell, men shall know and be assured that they shall never be delivered out of it, never, never, never: and this is the happiness of heaven, that men shall always rejoice, and shall be assured that they shall so continue to do ever, ever, ever.

Secondly, But in what way does a man come to this attainment; how and in what way is a man saved? Why in a way of free love and grace, for if God bestow any thing in a way of gift, it is free, for what is more free than gift. Now do but consider what these things are which are called in Scripture, salvation; and you may observe that they all come in a way of gift.

Sometimes salvation is put for the Author of salvation, Jesus Christ: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in

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peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Luke ii. 29, 30. That is, Christ the Author of our salvation. And so saith Christ to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house;" that is, Christ. Now this salvation is obtained in a way of gift. Saith Christ to the woman of Samaria, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink," &c., John iv. 10. He calls himself the gift of God.

Sometimes salvation is put for the means of salvation, for the gospel: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation," Heb. ii. 3; that is, the means of salvation, the gospel. This salvation is also called the gift of God: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xiii. 11.

Sometimes salvation is put for eternal glory. "Who would have all men to be saved, both Jew and gentile." And this salvation is the gift of God too. Rom. vi. 23, "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Now salvation, as to the Author of it, as to the means of it, and as to the salvation itself; it is all of free grace, all given in a way of free love and grace; and therefore it must needs be that much of the free grace and love of God is laid out in our salvation.

Thirdly. But you will say, If it be so, that by free grace we are saved, then what need we use the means of salvation; you say we are saved by grace, by free grace, wherefore then need we endeavour?

Yes, we are to endeavour: do you not use your endeavour to get your daily bread? and yet that is the gift of God. Your livelihood is the gift of God, for you say, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is then the gift of God, and yet we are to use the means. And so we are to do what we can, although not what we should in the matter of our salvation; because by our endeavour and using the means we shew our dependence upon God, and our obedience to him, because he hath commanded it. For,

Again, Although, I say with the apostle, "By grace ye are saved, and not of works;" yet works are necessary, good works are necessary in regard of our thankfulness to God; and necessary, as they are an evidence of our salvation, saith the apostle; although I say, by grace ye are saved, yet you

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are to be in the performance of good works. Eph. ii. 10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works;" the same word, good works. That is the third general. But,

Fourthly, Wherein doth the freeness of the grace of God appear in the matter of our salvation?

There is a great deal of free grace in this, that God should ordain us to eternal life and salvation. 2 Tim. i. 9, "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Again,

To name them. Is it not great grace, mercy and favour, that God should send his own Son from heaven to die for us and to purchase our salvation, yet so he did. "Ye are bought with a price." What price? "The blood of Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for you," 1 Tim. ii. 6.

Is it not a great mercy, a very great favour, that we that had broken the first covenant, and had not performed the conditions of it, that we should be set up again as I may say; that God should set us up again, under another covenant, that runs without any condition; and yet so he did, Heb. viii. 10. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law into their mind and write them in their heart, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

Yet further, it is in the matter of our salvation, as it is in the matter of our consolation and comfort; and as I said of that, so I say also of this: That the greater, and the more glorious any mercy is, and the more worthy and great the person is that giveth it, and the more unworthy the person is that receives it, the more doth the grace of him appear who giveth it; now what greater mercy, what more glorious mercy, than heaven and salvation? It is called the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven; it is called the kingdom of glory, and eternal glory; it is called joy, enter into the joy of our Lord: and great is the joy of our Lord; that joy which was set before Christ, that is the joy of the saints in heaven, "It is such as eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," 1 Cor. ii.

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9. Paul was wrapt up to heaven, but when he came down he was not able to declare the glory thereof; those that are in a war, are better able to declare the passages of it than those that write it, but yet they are not able to declare it all. So the apostle could speak something of this great and infinite glory, but was not able to declare it all. There was one, who was asked by his prince, What God was? he desired first, two days to answer, when they were past he required four days, and after four days, he asked eight days to answer; so if you should ask me what glory that is, which is in my text, I must take two days, and then four days, and then eight days to answer, and yet then I should not be able to declare, nor be able to express, this glory which is wrapt up in this one word, salvation.

But it may be this blessed estate is bestowed only upon those that are worthy? No, not so, this is most commonly bestowed upon those that are most unworthy: what is more unworthy than a dog? Why, was not Stephen looked upon as a dog? Yea, were not the Gentiles looked upon as dogs? Saith Christ; "Why cast ye the children's bread to dogs?" Now though salvation was of the Jews, for Christ came of the Jews, yet salvation is now for the Gentiles; and among the Gentiles who was more unworthy than a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the saints and servants of God, and such a one was Paul, and yet he was saved, though he was not only undeserving of it, but deserving quite the contrary; now who more undeserving than those that deserve the contrary? yet by grace even they are saved, therefore, saith the Psalmist, Ps. viii. 3. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him," &c. So I say, that the more glorious any mercy is, the more unworthy the receiver is, and the greater he is that gives, the more free is the thing given, and thus it is with our salvation. Salvation is a great, and glorious mercy, and this salvation is given, and that is great and glorious too, and it is given unto man who is most unworthy, and it is given by God who is most infinite and excellent above us. But again.

The more God doth cross hands in the matter of our salvation, the more free is his grace, in his bestowing of it upon

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us: for as I shewed you before, that God doth cross hands in the matter of our comforts, so I say now, that God doth cross hands in the matter of our salvation also; for he doth often save them that are most unlikely to be saved, as Paul, and Matthew the publican, and who more unlikely than Zaccheus or the thief on the cross, or the jailor? yet were these saved, though very unlikely to be saved. And so on the contrary, who more likely to be saved, than the young man in the gospel, that came to Christ, yet you know he was rejected: the young man he comes unto Christ, and says, Matt. xix. 16. "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Says Christ, Keep the commandments; All these things have I kept, saith he, from my youth upward; then saith Christ, Go, sell all that thou hast and then thou shall have treasures in heaven, and it is said he went away sorrowful." Mark now, was not this a forward young man, a very forward man, "all these, saith he, have I kept from my youth upward," and Christ doth not contradict him, and yet notwithstanding, this man could not do what Christ commanded him, he could not sell all he had; it was too hard for him to learn that lesson which Christ set him, for it is said that he went away sorrowful; and therefore saith Christ, "A rich man shall hardly enter in the kingdom of heaven:" and what is this but only to shew that God doth often cross hands in the matter of our salvation, to shew that "the first shall be last, and the last first," for God loves to cross hands in the matter of our salvation; and therefore we find in Scripture that there are some that come to Christ and say as the scribe in Matt. viii. 19: "Master, I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest," and Christ seems to put him off, and yet in the next verse almost he puts one forward, and he excuses himself and says, "Suffer me to bury my father," but Christ saith, "Follow me," &c. Thus you see what crossing of hands there is in the matter of our salvation, to shew "the first shall be last, I say, and the last first." Friends, stay but a little while, until the day of judgment, and then you will see what crossing of hands there will be; then you shall see some men at the right hand of Christ, whom you would have thought would never have been saved, and then also you shall see some on the left hand of Christ, whom you would have thought

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would never have been there. God, I say, will cross hands in the matter of our salvation, and the more he doth so, the more doth the freeness of his grace appear to them that are saved. Again,

Yet one thing more, the more our salvation is laid upon the arch or pillar of grace and love, the more free is the grace of God, and the more free it doth appear in the bestowing of it. Now what are the arches and pillars of free grace and love, upon which our salvation under Christ is laid. I shall name some of them.

The absoluteness of the covenant. That God justifies the ungodly. Thus our righteousness is not in us but in Christ. That the guilt of our sins by which we lay liable to condemnation is removed. That a little sincerity covers a great deal of infirmity. That what God calls our's is not indeed our's, but God's, as our graces, our duties, which are not indeed our's but God's. That God will in due time glorify us and honour us. Sin doth provoke God and causeth him to be angry with us, but grace doth provoke him to love us; and therefore the pillars of our salvation are laid under Christ upon grace, upon free grace and love: and thereby the freeness of the grace of God doth the more appear in the matter of our salvation. And that is the fourth general. But then,

Fifthly, Salvation is a work of grace; and seeing we are saved by grace alone, why then doth God choose to save men in this way of free grace? I answer,

It is because this is the most honourable way unto God. The papists are not ashamed to say that it is most honour to a man to be saved by works, but I am sure it is more honour and more honourable unto God to save by his free grace.

If there was somewhat of the good pleasure of God in the world's condemnation, all the reason in the world then that there should be free grace in the way of salvation. Pray how came Adam to stand for the whole world? He was not chosen by us, why it was the good pleasure of God that he should stand for the whole world, and that he sinning, we should be all guilty of sin by, and through him: so I say, if there was, as I may speak with reverence, somewhat of the good pleasure of God in the old world's condemnation, why then should there not be free grace in the soul's salvation, Rom. v. 15. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift,

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for if through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

God would have heaven and salvation to be of one piece; he would have the work of heaven to be the same; now there were many angels that fell, and many thousands that stood, why how came they to stand that did stand, more than the others that fell? it was only by free grace, they were elect angels. Now men and angels in heaven are of the same choir and sing the same song; and therefore those men that are saved, oh, who are they? why they are the elect, and they have great cause to glorify the grace, the free grace of God.

God saves men in a way of free love and grace, because none shall miss of salvation. As God will punish and condemn all the proud, all the wicked, that none shall escape; so he will also save all that he hath a mind to save, by free grace because they shall not miss of salvation.

God will save men in such a way as whereby he may be glorified to all eternity, and therefore he saves them in a way of free grace and love; for what have we to praise God for in heaven, but only for free grace, free grace, to glorify his name for that; therefore I say, God will save men in this way of free love and grace, that he may be thereby glorified hereafter to all eternity, and thus I have done with the doctrine; now go along with me a little by way of application.

If we be saved by free grace, if free grace and love be the foundation of our salvation, why should we not then stand clear from all our own works, as to the meritorious ends of them; for grace and works are opposed, and therefore faith as a work can neither justify nor save. I confess the apostle saith, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," but what follows, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13.

If we be saved by grace, why should we not be tender of the grace of God, of the name of God, of the free grace of God, and of the great name of God. Are you saved by grace and will you turn grace into wantonness? Oh, my friends, I say, if you be saved by grace and by grace alone, how

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tender should you be of the name of God and of the free grace of God.

If we be saved by grace, then we may here see the reason why many do take so much pains as they think for heaven, and yet fall short of it and go to hell; why it is because salvation lies under the conduct of free grace. Some men abstain from sin that they may not be damned, others perform holy duties, read and hear, &c., that they may go to heaven, yea "many strive and shall not enter," because salvation is of free grace.

If by grace ye are saved, and that there is much of the free grace of God in our salvation, why then should you doubt of it? I confess it is a hard thing to have assurance of your salvation, and if you have it, it is free grace to you more than to another, and free grace is the founder of it, if you have it. But yet, O soul, if by grace we are saved let us not then doubt of it, for it is most sure; if you are saved by grace, I say, why doubt ye then, oh, ye of little faith. O christians, comfort yourselves with these words, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. It is his good will and pleasure, it is in a way of free grace and love.

But you may say though it be in a way of free grace and love, yet it may not be for me, it may none of it be mine, saith the soul.

Nay, say not so, but mark what an inference the Psalmist makes and draws up from this general. Psalm cxxx. 4, 5: "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." And so in Psa. ciii. speaking at large of the grace, mercy and goodness of God, in the 8th verse he saith: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy;" but what is the conclusion: "Bless the Lord all ye his hosts, bless the Lord all his works, bless the Lord O my soul." The very last words are, "bless the Lord O my soul;" from the consideration of the freeness of the grace of God in general he draws up this conclusion, "bless the Lord O my soul."

But you may say: Though God will save by grace, yet surely all shall not be saved by grace. Shall all men be saved; is God so free?

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No, all men shall not be saved, for saith the apostle, Gal. v. 15: "We through the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith; for in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but the new creature." But shall not all be saved? No, saith the same apostle, Eph. v. 6: "Let no man deceive you, for no whoremonger, nor unclean person, &c., hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." There is no place for unclean things in heaven. You know what the apostle saith to the Galatians, "The inheritance is not to the bondwoman nor to her children." So that I say that God doth not save all, but those he doth save are saved by free grace.

But you would know who those are that are saved, or that shall be saved for ever; why, thus briefly only to name things:

Look who those are that are justified, they shall be certainly saved.

Those that are willing to part with all for Christ and for the service of Christ, they shall certainly be saved. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Matt. xix. 29.

They that stand at Christ's right hand here, they shall be sure to stand at Christ's right hand at the day of judgment; and so be saved. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of his Spirit; he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing," 2 Cor. v. 5; it is the very same word which is used for "work out your own salvation," &c. So that there is a working up of the soul unto eternal glory; and if Christ hath wrought you unto the self-same thing whilst you live here, then you are at his right hand now: and then you may be sure to stand at his right hand at the day of judgment, and so shall be sure to be saved for ever to all eternity.

Those that are tender to Christ's little ones, that are tender to those that are despised in this world, and ready to help and assist them according to their wants, they shall surely be saved for ever. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I

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was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; in prison, and ye came unto me. And the righteous answer, Lord, when did we see thee sick, or naked, or hungry, and fed thee, and clothed thee?" why saith he, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matt. xxv. 35. So I say, look who these are that are tender of Christ's little ones and are ready to help them, and to relieve them according to their wants and necessities; those are they that shall be saved to all eternity.

Those that "strive together for the faith in times of affliction," those are they that shall be saved for ever. "That ye stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel," Phil. i. 27. So I say, look who those are, that in the time of persecution strive for the faith, they shall surely be saved and that to all eternity. Yet one thing more.

Those that come to Christ in time of temptation, they shall be saved freely to all eternity. For saith our Saviour Christ, John vi. 39: "And this is my Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day;" in verse 37, says Christ, "him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," and I will give you the reason, saith he, "For it is the will of my Father that I should lose none which he hath given unto me, but that they should rise at the last day." How is it therefore with you, holy and beloved brethren in the Lord? Do you come to Christ in your temptations? Do you strive together in love for the faith in time of persecution? Are you tempted; are you brought low? Remember this, that Christ is able to raise you up and to save you to all eternity; and therefore, O soul, doubt not of your salvation.

But some may say, I am guilty of this doubting, what shall I do that I may not doubt of my salvation?

This is too large a subject to speak to now, I shall only say this to it. Let me desire you to study much the freeness of the grace of God in general; and consider also much and frequently, the particular instances of grace and mercy that God hath shewn to others, and you will find it is all of free grace; yea and this scripture shews you that all is of free

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grace; and therefore though it be a hard thing for us to get assurance of our salvation; yet the particular instances and examples of the mercies that God hath bestowed upon others, should much encourage us and bear us up, and should stir us up to get assurance. Grace and mercy being shewn to others doth not only shew that it may be had, but that mercy hath been had. When you see the ice frodden then you say you will venture. So you say, such a one was unworthy, such a one profane, and yet he hath obtained mercy and why may not I? Therefore if you would have assurance of your salvation, think much of the freeness of the grace of God; and withal consider the particular instances and examples of others, that have obtained this mercy and that in a way of free grace and love too.

And lastly to conclude, Is it so, that God saves the soul freely, and that our salvation is only by the free grace and love of God? Why then should we not come with boldness for salvation since it is so free; oh, let none be discouraged, but let it stir us up to come with boldness and to plead for it, if it be free. Is salvation free and will not poor sinners come to receive it? Come, oh, come freely for salvation, Christ Jesus is willing to make good his own name, and this is his name, he is called "Jesus, and he shall save his people." This is the will also of my Father, that you should come unto me, John vi. Christ Jesus hath now salvation in his hands, and will you not come and ask for it? But methinks I see salvation in your faces; methinks I hear a voice among you saying, "What shall we do to be saved?"

In answer to which thus: "Believe in the Lord Jesus; and venture your salvation upon him."

And then if you will be saved you must become as little children; for saith our Saviour, "unless you become as little children, you cannot be saved." Matt. xviii. 3. "You cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." As little children, how? Why not seeking great things; little children do not seek great things, you must become as little children, low and humble, not seeking great things, for great things become not little children. You must be willing to part with all at Christ's command and for his service; and for want of this the young man went away without eternal life: "Go and sell all that thou hast and follow me, and he could not do it;" and he

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lost heaven by it; he would keep earth and he lost heaven by it. But once more,

Be not only willing to part with all for Christ's sake, and at his command; but go and cast yourself at adventure upon his free grace and love, and then go and work, and perform duties and pray and use endeavour; work as if there were no grace to be saved by, and bear thyself still upon free grace, and build upon the grace of God, as though there were no works. Thus do and you shall be saved to all eternity, for ever and for ever.

SERMON IV.

"*But so did not I, because of the fear of God.*"—NEH. v. 15.

In this chapter, there are three things most considerable.

First, The voice or cry, at the beginning of the chapter; "And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives, against their brethren the Jews." And then,

Secondly, you have made known to you, what Nehemiah did in this case, in verse 6, 7, "And I was very angry when I heard their cry, and these words, then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers," &c.

Thirdly, You hear more of Nehemiah's acting at verses 14, 15, "Moreover from that time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor: for the former governors that had been before me, were chargable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver, yea even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because I feared God, because of the fear of God."

From hence then observe this truth or doctrine.

That those that truly fear God will not do as others do.

The true fear of God will keep men from doing those things that other men will do; yea, though an action be to a man's advantage, yet they that fear God will not do it, if

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it be evil; and so it was with Nehemiah. "But so did not I, because of the fear of God." For the opening of this we shall,

First, Inquire what it is to fear God; and we shall,

Secondly, Shew you that a man that truly fears God, will do as Nehemiah did, neither can he do as others do.

Thirdly, We shall shew you, what there is in this fear of God, that doth lay such a balance upon men's hearts, that they cannot do as others do.

Fourthly, We shall answer this question, whether a man that fears God, may not sometimes do as others do.

Fifthly, I shall shew you the issue and consequence of this truth.

And then I shall make some application.

First, If you ask what this fear of God is, I answer in the general. That it is a passion of the soul whereby a man doth flee from imminent evil. But now further, if you ask me, What the fear God is, I say that it is twofold:

A servile fear, and a filial fear.

A servile fear, whereby a man fears God upon the account of hell or judgment, or because of the wrath of God.

But now a fear of God, not only because of his judgments, but because of displeasing him, because of his love, because we would not offend; this is a filial fear, to fear him because we would not do contrary to his commands; and thus did Abraham, when he would have offered up his son Isaac: "For saith God, (Gen. xxii. 12.) "By this I know thou fearest God," because he obeyed his command, and was afraid to do contrary.

This fear of God, this filial fear, is not only because of his love, but of his love in conjunction with his greatness also: the greater a man is, the more we fear him, and the nearer he is in relation to us, the more we reverence him. Yet further, as the love of God in conjunction with his greatness, calls for our fear; so also,

The word and works of God call for our fear; for the word of the Lord is mighty, and his works are wonderful; for it is said of God, "that he is fearful in praises, working wonders." Thus if you ask me what this filial fear is, I say it is a fear whereby we fear him, because of his love, because of his

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greatness, and because of his word, and works. That is the first.

Secondly, A man that truly fears God, cannot do as others can do; for in the text we find that Nehemiah had an opportunity in his hand, to *make* himself, to *raise* himself, to make himself rich, as to outward things: but you see what he saith, "But so did not I, as others did because I feared God;" where the true fear of God is planted in a man's heart, he cannot, he will not do, as other men can and will do: I shall clear this to you by instancing in some particulars.

He that fears God, cannot do as others do in the matter of his choice; you know how it was with the damsel, the daughter of Herodias, Matt. xiv. 7, 8, when she had danced before Herod, he was so delighted with her, that he gave her this privilege, to choose what she would to the half of his kingdom, and she asked the head of John the Baptist. She was bad, and her choice was bad; not having the fear of God in her heart. But when Esther had her choice, she chose the contrary, for she chose the freedom of John the Baptist, in the freedom of the Jews: she acted not as the other did, because of the fear of God; they that fear the Lord cannot do as others do. I may instance in Moses also, he would not do as others; for saith he "I will choose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Heb. xi. 25. And why did he thus? but only because of the fear of God.

As they that fear God, will not do as others do in the matter of their choice; so neither will they do as others do in the matter of worship; for what saith Joshua, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord;" Josh. xxiv. 15. "Do you what you please. Therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the God's which your fathers served, or the gods of Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." As for me I will worship God, worship you whom you will; thus you see what they will do that fear the Lord.

Will you instance in the matter of your callings, for a man really is what he is in his calling, in his trade; or will you instance in the divine calling, you know what the apostle Paul saith; some, saith he, "preach Christ out of envy, and some out of good will," some to get a livelihood by it, to make a

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trade of it, to get riches, and honours, and estates; but so did not I, because of the fear of God; no great advantages will make a man that fears God, to do as others do; he saith always, others do so and so, but so will not I, because I fear the Lord.

A man that fears God cannot do as others can do, in the matter wherein he is intrusted. You know how it was with the spies, Caleb brought a good report of the land of Canaan, because he feared God; but so did not the others.

They that fear the Lord cannot do as others do, in the matter of afflictions. A man that fears the Lord, can love the Lord in adversity, and fear him in prosperity. It is said of king Ahaz, that he sinned more and more, because of his afflictions: but Jehoshaphat did not so, when he was under great afflictions and troubles, for he sought to the Lord, and laboured after faith and strength from him, that so he might be established: but so doth not the wicked man, because he feareth not God.

As there is a great difference between a good man, and a wicked man, or between one that fears the Lord, and one that doth not in the matter of afflictions: so there is a difference also in the matter of their refreshment, in their eating, and drinking and recreation. Job i. 5. "And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them." Job sanctified them, and so cannot a wicked man do; but a man that fears the Lord can do this. And,

A man that truly fears the Lord cannot do as others do, in the matter of right and propriety: they that fear not God will take advantage upon others, in the matter of their right and propriety. You may see what Abraham did; Lot would not let Abraham have his right, though it was his right, yet Abraham because he feared God, and for peace sake, gives up his right; but those that fear not the Lord cannot do so. Thus you see, that those that truly fear God cannot, will not do as others do, in the matter of his choice, of his worship, of his calling, of his afflictions, of his refreshments, or of his right and propriety. And that is the second general. But.

Thirdly, What is there in this fear of God, that should balance the soul, and cause it not to do as others do? Why,

By the fear of God a man is enabled to depart from evil, as

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the Psalmist saith. There are two seeds in the world, the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent: now these two seeds rule in the whole world; in some the seed of the woman rules, and in some the seed of the serpent: now they that are of the seed of the woman can fear the Lord, but they that are of the seed of the serpent cannot fear the Lord; and therefore no wonder that they that fear the Lord cannot, will not do as others do; why, it is because they are of another seed, they are of the seed of the woman.

As they that fear the Lord are of another seed, so they are also of another principle, and therefore they cannot do as others do. Principles are the springs of all actions, and every man acts according to his principle, according to the principle that is in him. Now he that fears the Lord differs from another man in his principles, and so he doth also in his actions and in his ends.

Look into his ends, and you shall see how they differ from other men's. Ends are the seeds of actions; and if so, a man that fears the Lord, his ends differ from other men's, and then no wonder that he cannot, will not do as others do. Again,

As he differs in his ends, so also in his conscience; every man is according as his conscience is. Take a man that fears the Lord, and he is tender of his conscience; but others that have their consciences burnt and seared are not so: and if so, then no wonder that he that fears the Lord cannot, will not do as others do.

As he that fears the Lord differs in the matter of his conscience, so he differs also in the matter of his restraints. A wicked man abstains it may be from one evil to commit another; but he that fears the Lord abstains from all evil because of the fear of God, which the other doth not. A wicked man is bad in good company, and a good man is good in bad company, yea he is the same in all company; therefore he that fears the Lord cannot, will not do as others do. But,

Fourthly, Is it possible for a man that fears the Lord to do sometimes as others do?

Yes, he may, for the apostle speaks plainly concerning the same, Rom. xii. 1. Mark what he saith: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye be not conformable

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to this present world," &c. But now observe this, that it is one thing what a man doth in a sudden passion, and another thing what he doth in his serious consideration. For take a man that fears the Lord, and in his sudden passion he shall deny Christ as well as another; but in the way of serious consideration he shall never do it. And further take notice, that it is one thing what a man doth in a particular action, and another thing what he doth in his common practice; for you may find in Scripture, that God's people have sometimes run away from God as to a particular action, but yet in their constant course they feared the Lord. And therefore those that fear the Lord do not do as others do, because if they turn aside, they repent of their so doing and turn to God again. So I say there is still a difference between them that fear the Lord and those that do not. But,

Fifthly, Suppose a man do truly fear the Lord, what is the issue and consequence thereof? Why the issue will be this; if you fear the Lord, God will deal well with you, he will deal well with you in a special manner; he will make a difference between you and another in his dispensations. Ps. i.: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night; he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, but whatsoever he doth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like unto the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Thus you see how God's dispensations shall be to them that fear him; it shall go well with them, but not so to the wicked. It is said that "Those that feared the Lord spake often one to another." And it is said in Isa. viii. 11, 12, "For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, not to walk in the way of this people," &c. Ps. cxii. 6, 7, 8, you may find there that there will be a great difference one day, between them that fear the Lord and they that do not: "Surely he shall not be moved for ever, the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of

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evil tidings, his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord: his heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever, his horn shall be exalted with honour. The wicked shall see it and be grieved, he shall gnash his teeth and melt away, the desire of the wicked shall perish. Yea God will do great things for them that fear him; he will put his law into their hearts, that thereby they may keep his commandments." He will do greatly for them, for his eye shall be upon them. The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous, and his ear is open to their cry. He is ready to answer those that fear him upon all accounts. Read what the Psalmist saith, Psalm xxxi. 19, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, that thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men."

Yea further, if you truly fear the Lord, the eye of God shall be upon you for good: "Unto him will I look that trembleth," unto him will I look that feareth, saith the Lord.

Again, if you truly fear the Lord, the Lord will delight in you.

Yea, God will be a God unto you, God will be a strong tower to you, and he will sanctify all unto you. And to say no more, they that fear the Lord shall want no good thing. Oh what a blessed thing is it then to fear the Lord, for from him God will withhold no good thing. And thus you see the issue of this fearing of God. Consider it, consider I say the consequence and issue of it, and let it be so many motives to stir you up more and more to fear the Lord.

So much shall serve for the doctrinal part, now then by way of application.

Here we may see what a sad excuse that will be which many make, that say they do but as others do; but alas, this is an excuse fit for the lips of those only who fear not God at all. But,

If this doctrine be true, then here you may see who those are that fear God in truth. There are many pretenders to it, but we find here that those that truly fear the Lord cannot, will not do as others do. They will not do as others

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do in the matter of their choice, in the matter of their worship, nor of their calling, nor in what they are entrusted with, nor in their refreshments, nor in their afflictions, nor in their right and propriety; and if it be so, how few are there that fear the Lord in truth. They that truly fear God say always as Nehemiah, "But so did not I because of the fear of God." There are many that lie quiet under sins of omission, and under sins of commission too; but so will not I because of the fear of God. Do others sin, and do others act contrary to the will of God; yet let us not do so, but let us say with Nehemiah, But so will not I because of the fear of God. Oh therefore let me desire all to fear the Lord. And for you that do fear the Lord, be you comforted, for comfort belongs to you. Everlasting mercy belongs to you who fear the Lord. "I have loved you with an everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3.

But it may be some will say, I am afraid I do not fear the Lord, and so this comfort doth not belong to me. Why consider,

Do you make conscience of what you do, doth your conscience accuse you or not for what you do, do you find conscience accuse or excuse?

Have you not sinned in the dark, when none could accuse but God only; and do you act and walk and live and labour as if you were in the presence and sight of God? If you do thus, then you do fear the Lord, "and then it shall be well with you," Eccles. viii. 12. Again,

Do you run and speak one to another? If so, then this is to fear the Lord, for it is said that they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. And,

Do you truly desire to fear the Lord, then look into Nehemiah, and observe his spirit well, and do accordingly. And to say no more,

Have you had advantages to make you rich in this world, and would you not take them, because of the fear of God? Then certainly you have received free grace, and you have the Spirit of God; for this is a true sign that you have true grace in your heart, and that you are one of them that truly fear the Lord; and therefore be you comforted, for comfort belongs unto you, everlasting mercy belongs unto you.

But it may be some will say, Suppose I do not fear the

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Lord, what shall I do that I may fear the Lord, fear him as I should do, fear him more and more.

For answer, If you would fear the Lord in truth, then

Be humbled for want of this fear. That man is not far from grace, who is humbled for the want of grace. A man will never be humbled for unbelief, unless he be humbled for the want of faith.

Go to God and beg of him to fulfil his promise. God hath said, "I will put my fear into their hearts;" now go to God, I say, and beg and desire him that he would make good this promise to you.

If you would fear God in truth, then observe what that is that is nearest and dearest to you, and give that up to God. You know Abraham offered up Isaac, his only son, and saith God, "By this I know thou fearest me." And further,

If you would fear the Lord in truth, then worship God according to his own appointment; take heed of mingling of God's worship with any of man's inventions, for he that doth so, feareth not God nor worshippeth him according to his own appointment. And then,

If you would fear the Lord in truth, then take heed of sinning when you have an opportunity. Again,

If you would fear God more, then love the Lord more, labour to strengthen your love to God. Again,

If you would have your fear strengthened more and more, then study much the free grace of God in giving out his mercy to one more than to another: "Two in a field, the one taken and the other left; two walking together, the one taken and the other left." If you would strengthen your fear study much the free grace of God.

If you would fear the Lord in truth, live much in and study much upon dependence wholly upon God; it is our great duty to depend upon God.

If a man be upon a high tower, and another holds him from falling by the hand only, he will certainly be very fearful of offending him that holds him so. Why we are thus in the hand of God, and our dependence is upon him for every thing; how fearful ought we then to be of offending this God. Oh, study your dependence upon God more and more. And,

Again, use the world as using it not. Deal with men as

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in the presence of God; and when you are dealing with men, be sure to deal with God before all the men in the world.

Again, let your eye be very much upon the severity and justice of God, upon his severity and justice. Consider God's severeness to Adam in eating the forbidden fruit; and his severeness to Moses for a word, that for one word God would not let him enter into the promised land; and consider his severity to David for numbering the people. Yea,

Again, consider that God can not only destroy the body, but soul and body too. Therefore, O man, fear him "that can destroy both body and soul, when he will, in hell fire."

Thus, now, if you would have your fear strengthened, then study these things; consider and meditate upon these things. But yet a little further.

If you would strengthen your fear of God more and more, then labour after more communion with him now, in this world, while you are here. We use to say, Too much familiarity breeds contempt; but here it is not so, for by familiarity and communion with God we shall have more sweetness and more delight in his ways, more strength in his service, more comfort in our afflictions. If you would, therefore, have these advantages, then labour to walk more close with God, and to have more communion with him; labour therefore, I say, to have more communion with God if you would fear him more and more. The greater a person is here on earth, as I told you before, the more we fear him; and the nearer he is in relation to us, the more we reverence him.

My friends, would you obtain everlasting mercy, would you have everlasting mercy belong to you? then labour to fear the Lord in truth yet more and more. And I beseech you to think of this truth, meditate upon it, think of it upon all occasions, and say, Do others slubber over duties? so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Do others walk injuriously? so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Do others do contrary to the will of God? but so will not I, because I fear the Lord. Let this truth go up and down with you, and it will keep you in your dealing both with God and man. Remember the character of one that fears the Lord; he is one that cannot, will not do as others do, for so saith the text: "But so did not I, because of the fear of God."

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SERMON V.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."—PSALM CXXXIII. 1.

In this short Psalm we may see the excellency of the saint's communion, fellowship, and brotherly agreement.

It is described and commended.

First, Described from the fountain of it, from God as a Father, and therefore he says, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren."

Secondly, Described, also, from the act and exercise thereof, which is, "to dwell together in unity."

Thirdly, It is commended from the goodness, and profitableness, and pleasantness of it. It is a good thing, a profitable thing for brethren to dwell together in unity; behold how good it is in the eyes of men; behold how pleasant it is beyond expression "for brethren to dwell together in unity."

And the goodness and pleasantness of it is expressed by two similitudes. It is compared to the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron: verse 2, "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that run down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garment."

It is compared, also, to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: verse 3, "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." &c. Thus, you see, the design of this Psalm is to declare the goodness and profitableness of unity between brethren, from whence, then, I take up this observation:

That a loving agreement between the saints, among themselves, is exceeding pleasant and very profitable.

Some things are pleasant but not profitable, and some things are profitable and not pleasant, as physic, &c.; but communion and fellowship, and a loving agreement among the saints is both pleasant and profitable.

It is a pleasant thing for the saints and people of God to agree together; for the same word which is used here for *pleasant*, is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music, such as when they rise to the highest strains of the viol, when the strings are all put in order to make up a harmony,

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so pleasant is it, such pleasantness is there in the saints' agreement.

The same word is used also in the Hebrew for the pleasantness of a corn field. When a field is clothed with corn, though it be cut down, yet it is very pleasant, oh, how pleasant is it; and such is the saints' agreement.

The same word in the Psalmist is used also for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in opposition to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the corn field, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermon and the hills of Zion: and all this is to discover the pleasantness, profitableness and sweetness of the saints' agreement: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is," &c. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves.

There are many times breakings and losings in the love of the saints, and therefore when they come to an agreement and union among themselves again, it must needs be very pleasant and profitable and sweet, for things once lost and found again are very sweet. And upon this account it is, that the commandment of love is called "a new commandment," because it is broken so often, and so often renewed again. And the Psalmist speaks here of the sweetness and pleasantness of unity, because there is no sweetness in division; but unity is a good way and means to keep out trouble and evil division from among the people. And,

Further, the more difficulty any mercy is obtained with, the sweeter it is when obtained. There are many things which are hard to come by, but when they are obtained they are sweet; and so there are many difficulties in the way of love and sweet agreement, and the people of God are encumbered with many difficulties, they have many things to put them out of the way of love and of sweet agreement among themselves, and therefore saith the apostle, Phil. i. 27, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Again. The more suitable any thing is to our condition,

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the more pleasant and sweet it is. Now this brotherly love and union is a conjunction of suitable things, and is suitable to our condition, and suitable things are delightful unto men, and the more suitable any thing is, the more we delight in it. And this agreement, this union, is every way suitable to our own condition as we are *men;* and is also suitable to all the creatures, for they run together and agree together. And it is suitable to us also as we are *christians,* it is suitable to Christ's command: "A new command (saith he) I give unto you, that you love one another." It is suitable to Christ's own example, who hath loved us; and suitable also to the gospel, which is a gospel of peace: "Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel, that you be of one spirit and of one mind." So, I say, this holy agreement is every way suitable, and therefore the more pleasant and delightful, and so it ought to be unto us.

As it is pleasant and delightful, so it is a profitable good: "Behold how good a thing it is," it is very profitable. For is it not profitable for the "dew to fall upon Hermon, and upon the hills of Zion, to make them fruitful?" Why such is the dew of holy agreement, when it falls upon the hearts of men: and this doth make men increase and multiply in the church, and to be fruitful in good works; the Psalmist saith, "God commandeth his blessing;" and when God blesseth, we shall certainly increase and multiply; and this I say doth increase the church, and hereby are the saints both increased and delighted by the blessing of God on them, they do increase in things that are good and profitable; and this was the thing which Christ prayed for, yea prayed for again and again; yea as I said it is the great thing which Christ hath commanded: a new command &c. Is it not therefore good and profitable to love one another?

Again, This is the mercy and the grace that is promised, specially in the latter times glorious things are spoken of, and and promised to the last days; and this is one of those things which are promised, and if so, it is then certainly good and profitable.

Again, This is the legacy which Christ left with his disciples and people; saith he, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you,"

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John xiv. 27, and therefore surely this agreement among brethren is very good and profitable.

Again, Certainly it is good and profitable to walk worthy of the high calling to which Christ hath called us, as the apostle speaks, Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, "I beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," &c.

Again, Is it not good and profitable that our prayers should be heard, that God should hear and grant our requests and prayers? Why, look into the Scriptures, and you will find that our love is a help to our prayers; it is a help unto us, whereby to have our prayers heard and answered.

Again, Is it not good and profitable for a man to know that he is a child of God, and that he hath an interest in Christ? Why, look into 1 John iii. 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren:" there is a day of death, of natural death, whereby man shall pass from life to death; and there is likewise a time of spiritual life; when a man passeth from death to life. Now how shall I know whether I am "passed from death to life?" Why, if I love the brethren. Yea, saith Christ, "Hereby shall all know that you are my disciples, if you love one another:" not only yourselves shall know it, but others shall know it also; and is it not then very good and profitable? For hereby you shall know that your prayers are heard; and by this also you shall know that you are passed from death to life; and hereby you shall not only know yourselves to be Christ's disciples, but others shall know it also; and if it be so, then certainly it must be good and profitable.

Again, This will give a relish and a savour to all your enjoyments; it is the salt of all your comforts: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

Although our condition be never so prosperous, yet if we cannot agree among ourselves, if love and peace be wanting, that sours all the rest; and though the ordinances be never so sweet, and our privileges never so many, yet if we be not united together in love, all is made sour; this is that which sours all our enjoyments, the want of love and agreement, for that gives a relish to all our enjoyments when we have it.

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Again, This is that which will make all things easy unto you, though they be never so hard in themselves; whereas the contrary will make all things hard though never so easy: if I am to do a work or service for one: why, though the work be never so hard of itself, yet love will make it easy; many complain and say they cannot profit by the ordinances: why, what is the reason? It is for want of love to them; there are jars and contentions between friend and friend, between this man and the other man; why, it is for want of love: love would make all things easy for you, though never so hard. Now put all these things together, and then you may see, what a pleasant and profitable thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, to love, to unite, to live in unity one with another.

Well then if this be so, why should we not all abound in it? Why do not we love and agree one with another, if it be so good and profitable as we have heard, then let us all agree together.

But it may be some will say, we do live together in love and unity, and we are united one to another, but

Yet give me leave to mind you of what the apostle saith, 1 Thess. iv. 9, "But as touching brotherly love, you need not that I write unto you; for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another, and indeed ye do it towards all the brethren which are in all Macedonia; but we beseech you brethren that you increase more and more." Though you do it, yet we beseech you to increase it more and more, and so I say to you: yea and Christ hath commanded it also, and you must do it in obedience to his command.

If our love be right as it should be, then we shall love others also, even our neighbours and friends and brethren; we shall love them as ourselves. "The second commandment (saith our Saviour) is like unto it, that you love your neighbour as yourself." Pray for yourselves, do all the good you can for yourselves, avoid all iniquity that may come upon yourselves, and to prove your love to be right do all this for your neighbours also, and love them as yourselves.

If our love be as it should be, we shall then love others, because they are godly, let them be of this opinion, or of the other opinion, yet that matters not; though they be not of my opinion, yet if my love be right, I love them because they

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are godly, and I love him most that is most godly; and as he increaseth in godliness, so must my love increase toward him.

If your love be true, and such as it ought to be, then you will love one another, and love your brother; as Christ loved you, even so ought you to love one another; how was that? Why, Christ loved you freely, in opposition to all the injuries you had done unto him: it is said, 1 John i. 6, 7, "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another:" and in John iii. 16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Yea Christ hath so loved us, that he hath laid down his life for us; and we are to love as Christ loved, even to the laying down of our lives for our brethren.

If your love be true, it ought to be without restriction, yea and without all dissimulation: I say you are to love without any restriction, the only measure of love is to know no measure; and you are to love without any dissimulation, yea, and your love ought to be also, without degeneration; many do begin to love spiritually, but end carnally; but true love is without restriction, dissimulation, or degeneration.

If your love be true and such as it ought to be, then it will never be bought, neither can it be sold; love cannot be bought, and if it be true love, it will never be sold, neither directly nor indirectly.

If your love be as it ought to be it will be singular, it will make you singular in your love. "Love your enemies, saith Christ; It hath been said you shall hate your enemies, and love your neighbours," but I say unto you, love them both, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and despitefully use you; for if you love them that love you what reward have you, do not even the publicans so," Matt. v. 43, 44, 45. Love them that hate you, this is singular love; and love where it is true will make a man thus singular in his ways and carriage.

True love is a praying love. Says one, "I never loved any man, till I had prayed for him in particular." True love, I say, is a praying love.

And true love is a love at all times, at one time as well as another.

And a man that loves truly declares that he is loosened

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from the world, and that he is one that is wrought upon by the Holy Ghost. In the primitive times, it was said that they were all of one heart, and all things were common among them; and when we are thus of one heart and of one mind it doth declare that we have been wrought upon by the Holy Ghost; and therefore certainly there is a great mistake in men's love; all men say they love the saints; they love them in words, though I am afraid many love them but little in their hearts.

But you will say, How far is our love to be exercised, upon whom and how far? I say no more but this, so far as the word brethren doth extend, so far this union and love ought to go, "Behold how pleasant and how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." So far, I say, as this word brethren extends; and that is so far as God is their Father, it matters not for opinion or what judgment they are of; if God be their Father they are your brethren, and are to be beloved by you, and so far is your love to reach and extend.

But you will say, Wherein doth this love consist?

Why, in these three things:

In the matter of our judgments.

In the matter of our affections. And

In the matter of our practice.

1. In the matter of our judgments. "Be of the same mind one towards another, mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate; be not wise in your own conceit, recompence no man evil for evil; if it be possible as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." Rom. xii. 16.

2. In the matter of our affections, in the 10th verse of this chapter: "Be kindly affectioned one towards another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

3. In the matter of our practice, read the 3rd verse of this chapter: "For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Thus you see how we should act as to our judgments, affections, and practices one toward another.

But you will say, If this be so, then how much is our

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love wanting one toward another, but what shall we do that our love to one another may be more knit together; what shall we do that we may advance and rise to this holy agreement, both in our own hearts and others?

For answer hereunto take these directions.

Be serious in this work and lay aside the former hinderances of your love, and your former divisions; and let not any of you say this is the fault, and that is the fault, and such a one is the cause of it, and such a one is the occasion of it. No, but lay the fault on yourselves, lay it upon yourselves and not upon others, and say, "It is I, the Lord knows it is I; it is I that have raised this storm;" and say as David, "I have sinned, I have sinned." Let not your former divisions be forgotten, but take warning by them; lay not the fault, I say, upon others, but upon yourselves, and acknowledge it and say, It is I, I Lord that have sinned. And,

If you do desire to be serious in this work, then do you desire peace; and if it be possible live at peace with all men. The same word that is used in the original for persecutors, is also used for peace, to shew that we should follow after it with might and main, as persecutors follow those they persecute, and that if possible we should live at peace with all.

Be sure you strengthen your love; love must be strengthened else this union cannot continue; it is the property of love to interpret things in the best sense, to interpret things well.

It is the property of love to speak highly of the person or thing beloved; where there is a uniting and a sweet agreement, there love will speak high things of each other.

The property of love is to cover the infirmities of those they love; and indeed how can there be any agreement if infirmities be not covered. It is the property of love to give no offence, nor to take any; and it is a great sign that there is no agreement, nor no love, when people are so apt to give offence and to take offence; for true love is apt to do neither, but to take all in good part.

True love knows how to give and how to take admonitions. And thus you have heard what love will do; therefore I beseech you to strengthen your love to one another; yea, I

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beseech you in the Lord to increase it more and more one toward another.

But you may say further, Suppose there be a difference in the matter of our judgments or opinions; what shall we do to remove it? Why,

Be sure of this, that you do not mistake the meaning of that scripture which your judgment is founded upon. It is said "There was a division among the people because of Christ;" why for what was it, what was the reason of it? It was because of misunderstanding, and for want of a right understanding of Christ. So I say, this division may come for want of a right understanding of the Scriptures, upon which our judgment is grounded and founded. But

Consider, O man, whether you do not settle your judgment upon the judgment or opinion of any, or upon the knowledge of another. "Hast thou faith," saith the apostle, "have it to thyself before God;" Rom. xiv. 22. But is not a man then to confess his faith before others when he is called to it? Yes, but the apostle speaks here of lesser things; if thou hast faith have it to thyself in little disputable things; and do not rely upon others, but look to thyself and give things a time; "in due time God will reveal," saith the apostle.

If you desire this holy agreement, then do what you can to keep union in the ministry and between the ministry. It was not for nothing that our Saviour prayed, John xvii. 11, 21, "Holy Father keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are, that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." It is not good for people to cry, "I am for Paul, and I am for Apollos, and I am for Cephas," and the like, this is the way to make division; therefore do all you can to live in love and unity; for love is of God and the contrary is of the devil.

Take heed of disputation, what have we got this many years by disputation? Those that are weak are sooner brought in by humiliation than by disputation.

If after all this there do remain division among you, by reason of your judgments or opinions; then remember the apostle's rule and be sure to walk by it; for, saith he(as we instanced before) "Let no man think more highly of himself

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than he ought to think, but to think soberly; as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The apostle directs us to live humbly and to walk meekly one toward another; and not to be rash or to think highly of ourselves, But further:

If you would live in love and unity, then let us look upon other men's infirmities in conjunction with their excellencies, and their excellencies in conjunction with their infirmities; and thereby the one will take away or hide the other. Let us not pore only upon a man's infirmities, upon his *buts* as I may say; he is a godly man but———: therefore if you would agree, join his infirmities and his excellencies together, and then look upon him.

If you should meet with any provocation that may weaken your love one toward another, then be sure to take that as an opportunity to exercise your patience and your love; when you meet a beggar in the streets full of sores, then you think you have an opportunity to exercise your charity, to give something. And so you should say when you are provoked by another to debilitate your love and affection, you may say, Why now have I an opportunity to exercise my patience. Again,

If you will live in love and unity, then you must resolve with the grace of God, to love where you are not beloved; let love arise above all difficulties; labour for a gospel spirit, to love though you are not loved. A legal spirit is a fretful spirit, saith Christ, "You know not of what spirit you are of;" labour, I say, after a gospel spirit, yea the spirit of Christ "who was as a lamb, he opened not his mouth." If you would live in love and unity, then take heed of a legal spirit, and labour after this gospel spirit. Again,

If you would agree together and live in love and unity, then be humbled for the want of love to one another, and take heed for the future of those things that hinder your love one toward another. There are four or five of them, observe them and take heed of them.

1. Pride. A proud man is much given to contention.

2. Passion. For though a man dislikes and is sorry for what he hath done in his passion when it is over; and though what he doth in his passion be one thing, and what he doth

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in his serious consideration is another thing; yet we are to take great heed of passion.

3. Another enemy to love is strangeness; strangeness ends in enmity. When brethren and friends grow strangers one to another, then they surmise things one of another, and that destroys love and unity.

4. Another is designing one against another. True love knows no designs upon others. No man can endure to have designs laid against him. Designing causeth anger, enmity and hatred, and hinders true love one toward another.

5. Another is whispering: "A whisperer separateth true friends," Prov. xvi. 28. But now if any one should come to me and tell me any thing against a brother, I would not believe the whisperer till I had spoken with the other; for a cause can never be truly known nor judged of, till both parties have been heard speak. Thus you may see the five things that hinder love, that is, pride, passion, strangeness, designing one upon another, and hearkening unto whisperers. Now as you desire to live in love and unity, observe these things, and take heed of them.

Let me say to you, holy and beloved brethren, if you would love one another, then forgive one another, and live more unto God who loveth you; live more to God, lest he should turn his love to hatred and wrath against you.

Strengthen your love to God himself; the more love you have to God, the more will you love others.

If you would live in love and unity, then you must willingly take wrong, and give up your right for peace sake and for agreement. Saith Abraham to Lot, "Let there be no difference between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we are brethren." Now Abraham was the elder, and therefore it was his right to have the choice; but yet for peace sake he gives up his right, and says to Lot, "Take what you will, the right-hand or the left." There was a division between them, and the Canaanites were in the land, and therefore it was no good time for them to be at difference one with another. When the Canaanites were in the land, it was no good time then for good men to strive, and therefore Abraham for peace sake gives up his right. So I say for peace sake and for a holy agreement, you should willingly give up your right, and render up your own right to preserve peace

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and unity one with another. O friends, love one another, that you may declare yourselves to be heavenly children, to be children of your heavenly Father. Consider Phil. i. 27: "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come or be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

O friends, let me beseech you to love one another, and to take all advantages that may increase your love. How can you shew your face before the free love and grace of God, if you do not love one another? With what face can you go to God for free grace and love, when you yourselves have no love for your brethren.

If a poor man should do a rich man a great deal of prejudice, and if this rich man should nevertheless invite this poor man to a feast, and welcome him, and do him abundance of good; would you not say that this is wonderful love and kindness, because the poor man is no way able to gratify him, or to make any requital for what he receives, but only by thankfulness: it may be he may be thankful to him. Why thus it is with us now, this is our own case; for we have done great injury to God, and yet God hath loved us, and hath given us blessings and riches. And what doth he expect for it all? Surely no reward from us, for he knows we are poor and not able to gratify him; no, he expects nothing, but only that we should love one another. Says God, You can do nothing for me, all that I desire is, that you would love one another in truth. How then, I say, will you be able to shew your faces before the God of heaven, if you love not one another.

Oh look after this love, which is so much commended in this little Psalm. Oh how sweet and perfuming it is, it is as sweet as honey, "it is like unto the oil that ran down Aaron's beard, like the dew upon Hermon, and as the dew that fell down upon the mountains of Zion." Yea this it that which is sweet and profitable, that which will perfume you. Now if you do desire that God's perfume may come upon you, and that the dew of God's blessings may fall upon you, labour more and more to love one another, and let not love be wanting. I cannot tell how it may be with you, yet let me desire you, as you would honour yourselves now, and as

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you desire happiness in this life, and also to be blessed hereafter to all eternity, observe this new commandment to love one another. And as you do desire to declare that you have received free grace, and that you have that seal with which God seals the soul for his own, to live with him for ever, be exhorted to be of one mind, and love one another. "Rejoice in the Lord, and be of one mind;" be united one to another, and let your hearts abound in love more and more one toward another.

SERMON VI.

"*The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it.*"—MICAH VI. 9.

METHINKS I see a great rod ready to be laid upon the back of this nation, and I would therefore at this time endeavour to inform you what the voice of this rod is; and have to that end chosen this scripture to speak unto.

In this chapter then you have God's controversy with his own people, set down at the end of verse 2: "For the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." And then he chargeth them with

1. Unthankfulness for many years, in verses 3, 4, 5: "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherewith have I wearied thee? Testify against me, for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," &c.

2. He chargeth them with formality, and shews them the evil of it, in verses 6, 7: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams," &c. And then,

3. He pleads against them, in verse 8: "He hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." And then,

4. He seals up the sentence in this verse of my text: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

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Wherein you have three things especially remarkable.

1. The people the Lord's voice crieth unto, and that is unto the city. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city."

2. You have an exhortation to hear the voice of the rod. "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

3. You have an argument to press you so to do; it is your wisdom: "The man of wisdom shall see thy name." "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city," that is, unto Samaria and Jerusalem, the chief cities: "And the man of wisdom shall see thy name;" the dispensations of God in the way of his mercy or justice are his name. As a man is known by his name, so God is known by his dispensations; which though they be dark to the world, yet the man of wisdom shall see them and discern them. "Therefore hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it," the rod; that is, the rod of correction. Now there is,

1. The rod of power and dignity, "He shall send his rod out of Zion."

2. There is a rod of discrimination: "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you under the bond of the covenant," Ezek. xx. 37,

3. There is the rod of direction: "Thy rod and thy staff they shall comfort me."

4. There is a rod of government, both ecclesiastical and civil. As for ecclesiastical, saith Paul, "Shall I come unto you with a rod;" and as for civil, "He that spareth the rod hateth the child."

5. There is a rod of destruction: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel," Psalm ii. 9.

Now it is a rod of correction that we are to understand here, from whence I take up this observation:

That when God visits the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their best wisdom to hear the rod and who hath appointed it; it is their true interest and best wisdom so to do.

For the opening and clearing hereof, I shall speak to these four or five propositions.

First, That God doth not steal upon a people with his judgments, but he first warns them before he smites them.

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Secondly, When God smites his own people, he deals with them in the way of rod.

Thirdly, That God's rod is a teaching rod.

Fourthly, That the message of the rod is commonly sent to the great cities and to the great towns of a nation or people.

Fifthly, When God smites his own people with the rod, it is their best wisdom and their duty to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.

First, Though God consumes a nation at once, and destroys a nation at once, at last; yet he still doth and will warn a people before he destroys them: God will not steal upon a people with his judgments, but he first warns them before he consumes them. He hath his murdering pieces which he will discharge in due time, but he will first discharge his warning pieces. And God doth sometimes warn people by his word, and sometimes by his works and dispensations. Ezek. xxxiii. 2, "Son of man, speak unto the children of thy people, and say unto them, If I bring a sword upon the land," &c. And at the 7th verse he applies it. So saith he, "Thou, O son of man, I have set thee as a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and warn them from me." Would you know what this warning is, why it is a warning by the word.

Sometimes God warns his people by his works and dispensations, by his judgments upon others and by his afflictions upon themselves, he brings a lesser judgment to prevent a greater; it is with the works of God as it is with his word. Now God doth sometimes hew down men by the word, yea he hews them down by the ministry of the word. There is a time when God will hew down sinners by the ministry of the word, and lays them upon the ground a drying, as I may say, for hell, before they come there. Matt. iii. "The tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Hosea vi. 5, "Therefore I have hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth," &c. There is a time of hewing down, a time when God will hew men down by the ministry of the word; and as he doth thus by his word, so he doth the same also by his works and dispensations: and though God may and can des-

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troy a people at once, yet he will not seize upon them before he warns them. That is the first proposition.

Secondly, When God smites his own people he deals with them in the way of the rod; though he punish others with scorpions, yet, saith he, for you that are in covenant with me, if you sin, "I will visit your transgressions with a rod." Look what worldly afflictions come upon the saints; they are struck with the rod. What greater afflictions do you read of than what fell upon Job; why yet it was the stroke of the rod: "Let him take away his rod from me," Job ix. 34. When God deals with his people, I say, he deals with them in the way of the rod; and if you ask the reason why God uses the rod with his own people, I answer,

1. Because they are his own children. "If you endure chastisement God deals with you as with children; if you be without chastisement you are bastards and not sons," Heb. vii. 7, 8. I know no better argument against the Church of Rome, says Luther, than this, that she reigns without the cross. If two children are fighting together, and a man comes and parts them, and strikes one of them and not the other, you will presently imagine that the child which he strikes is his own. And so if you ask why God useth the rod to his people, I answer, because they are his own children. And,

2. As they are children, so he loves them, and he that spareth the rod hateth the child. Now God doth not hate his children, "for every son that he loveth he chastiseth;" God loves his children and therefore he deals with them in the way of the rod.

3. There is "much folly bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction bringeth it out," saith Solomon, and therefore God doth sometimes correct his people because of their folly.

Why do schoolmasters use the rod, but only to make children learn their lessons; if they would learn without he would not use the rod. And why doth God use the rod with his people, but to learn them their lessons; for these reasons therefore doth God use the rod with his people.

But you will say, Doth not God use the rod with the wicked too; do not they come under the rod as well as the righteous?

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I answer, Solomon saith, "The rod is for the back of the fool;" and wicked men are called fools in Scripture. God doth sometimes chastise the godly by the wicked; the wicked are the rod in God's hand. And sometimes, again, God doth punish wicked men by the saints, the saints being the rod in God's hand. Sometimes, I say, wicked men are the rod for the godly: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff of their hand is mine indignation," Isa. x. 5. And sometimes the godly are the rod of God in the hand of God for punishing the wicked: "The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance, the Lord of hosts is his name. Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war, for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms," Jer. li. 19, 20. So, I say, as the Lord whips the saints by the wicked, so he also lashes the wicked by the godly, they being the rod in the hand of the Lord.

But you will say is there no difference between these two?

I answer, Yes, for there is a whipping rod, a rod of correction, and there is also a breaking rod; a whipping rod for the saints and a breaking rod for the wicked. In the iind Psalm it is said, "Thou wilt rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Though God doth afflict his own people with the rod—the wicked being the rod in God's hand—yet he will cast that rod into the fire when he hath done with it; but though he doth also punish the transgressions of the wicked by the righteous, they being the rod in God's hand, yet will he not cast that rod also into the fire upon that account. The saints may rejoice when they see the wicked punished, because they know that themselves shall not be thrown into the fire; but the wicked have no cause to rejoice when they see the godly afflicted, because they may be sure they themselves shall be thrown into the fire when they have done their work. The child may laugh when he sees the rod thrown into the fire, because he knows he shall not be thrown in himself.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet it is a rod that chastiseth in measure, as you may find Isa. xxvii. 7, 8: "Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him, or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure when it shooteth

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forth thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." And so in Psalm lxxxix. 31, 32: "If his children forsake my law, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes." And so 2 Sam. vii. 14: "I will be his Father and he shall be my son; if he commit iniquity I will chastise him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men." So I say, though God chastise his own people with a rod, yet it is in measure, but the bones of the wicked shall be broken, it shall fall very heavy upon them.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet it is in season, it is but what is very seasonable; they are so cut and lopt as that they may grow again. "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xiii. 24, or in the morning; that is, he doth it in season: but now the wicked are so cut off that they never grow more.

Though God visiteth the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet his loving kindness he will never take away from them. "If they sin (saith God), I will visit them with a rod, but my loving kindness I will not take away from them," Ps. lxxxix. 33. But it is not so with the wicked.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet he will not suffer the rod to rest upon their backs. If your garments be dirty or dusty, you take a rod or a wand and beat out the dust, but when it is out you do not let the rod rest upon the garment; so God causeth his rod to pass upon his people, but when their dirt and filth is out and removed, he will take away the rod from off them, and will not suffer it to rest upon their backs. So that you see there is a vast difference between the rod of the wicked and the rod of the godly in these particulars: the rod of the wicked is a breaking rod, but the rod of the godly is a correcting rod; the rod of the godly is thrown into the fire, the rod of the wicked is not so; the rod of the godly is seasonable, the rod of the wicked is not; the rod of the godly is in love, the rod of the wicked not so; and, lastly, God will not let the rod rest upon the back of the righteous, but the rod of the wicked shall never be removed. And that is the second proposition.

Thirdly, God's rod is a teaching rod: when God smites

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his people he deals with them in the way of the rod, and that is a teaching rod, it brings a message with it. For the clearing of this I shall shew you,

1. What those lessons are which the rod teacheth.

2. How this rod teacheth.

1. If you ask what lessons this rod teacheth; I answer in the general, the rod teacheth the same lesson that the word teacheth, the rod teacheth no new doctrine; but more particularly, the rod hath a lesson for

The converted, and for

The unconverted.

If you be unconverted, the rod calls upon you to turn to God. If a drunkard be sick, the rod of sickness says, O drunkard, leave off thy drunkenness and turn to the Lord. This lesson the rod teacheth; and it taught the jailor, and Paul, and the prodigal. When the rod of misery and poverty was upon the prodigal, why then, says he, "I will return to my father, for in my father's house is bread enough." Thus the rod teacheth the unconverted to turn to the Lord. Art thou in thy sins still, therefore, O poor sinner, and hast thou gone on a great while in thy sins, and hath God warned thee often by his word to turn to him, and doth he now come upon thee with his rod? why this is all but to teach thee the same lesson still, though in another way; and the lesson is, "Hear and your souls shall live," but if you will not hear the whipping, the correcting rod, you shall hear and feel the breaking and the destroying rod. This is the lesson which the rod teacheth the unconverted.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to mortify your sins more and more. "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil, so do stripes the inward parts of the belly," Prov. xx. 20. "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged," Isa. xxvii. 9. By this, that is, by affliction, by the rod; if therefore you have neglected any duty that you have performed heretofore, or ought to perform, the rod now calls upon you to do it, now "remember your first works and repent."

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to prize those common mercies which you have not valued heretofore. You have had peace, but you have not prized it; now the rod of war should teach you to prize it: you have had a quiet habitation, but have not prized it; now the rod of tumult calls

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upon you to prize your quiet habitation, and to be thankful for it. This is another lesson which the rod teacheth.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to honour your own graces, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed," Rom. v. 3. You know how it is with a countryman that makes hay; the hay lies abroad, and he sees a black cloud a coming, and he calls to his men to cock up and gather up the hay. Why, look into the nation, and see what a cloud is over us! this calls upon the people of God to gather up their evidences. Here is a black cloud over us: oh, all ye people of God, gather up your evidences, that by the dark night of affliction you may have light to read your own graces. This is another lesson the rod teacheth.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to sympathize with others in their afflictions; by you own afflictions you are called upon to compaasionate others in their afflictions.

And, lastly, if you be converted, the rod calls upon you to provide for your great and last change. David understood this, and therefore he says, "Lord, teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart to true wisdom," Psalm xc. 12.

These are the lessons which the rod teacheth.

2. If you would know further what the rod teacheth, I answer negatively,

The rod doth not teach you by any skill or knowledge of its own, but the Spirit of the Lord in the rod, that teacheth; "Blessed is the man that thou chastenest and teachest him out of thy law," Ps. xciv. 12. By the rod a man shall see that presented to him which lay hid before. When the glass is shaken you see that sand which you could hardly or not at all perceive before; so when a man is shaken by affliction, his sins are discovered by him; and a sight of sin is the first step to conversion.

By the rod you are humbled and broken and made more fit and capable to receive instruction. When the young horse is once well broke, then he is afterwards fit for the saddle; now afflictions break men and fit them for God's service and for God's work. If a narrow mouthed vessel be in continual motion and unfixed, you cannot pour any liquor into it; you must first fix the vessel, and then you may put what you will

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into it: so afflictions will fix you and settle you. You have many a poor man that no ground will hold him, as we use to say, till afflictions come, and then they settle him. If you sow seed, you must first plough the ground, and then you sow the seed. Now what soul is there which doth not need God's plough? Why God's rod is his plough; and when this rod comes and breaks and humbles the heart, then it will receive the good seed of God's word into the furrows of the heart. And further,

By the rod a man will be forced to lay hold of and stick to those promises which he could not lay hold on before; for when the rod comes and brings him low, the man is glad to run to the promise: and truly it is a very great comfort to us that we have a promise to run unto when we are brought low with the rod. And thus you see what lessons the rod teacheth, and also how the rod teacheth: it is a teaching rod. And so I have done with the third proposition; the next follows.

Fourthly, As the rod is teaching, and doth bring a message with it; so this message is sent especially to the great cities and towns of a nation or people. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city" here in the text. Why what city or cities? It was Jerusalem and Samaria. But did not God's voice cry unto the lesser towns and villages? Yes; but when a national rod comes, the message is especially sent to the great towns and cities of a nation. For,

The rod comes to avenge the quarrel of the word. Look, therefore, on that place or people that have had the greatest opportunities, as to hearing of the word and having the means of grace, and yet have abused them; the greater controversy hath the rod with that place or people. Now great towns and cities have commonly the greatest opportunities as to the word and ordinances, and many times they are most abused in and by these; and therefore the voice of the rod is especially to great towns and cities. "Woe unto thee, Capernaum." And why unto Capernaum and not to the towns and villages? Why! "Woe unto thee, Capernaum, for thou hast been exalted unto heaven," in regard of the means, and yet hast not repented, Matt. xi. 23; therefore, Woe unto thee above all the rest of the towns about thee. And so, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (saith Christ) I cannot but weep over thee; I

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would have gathered you but you would not," &c. Therefore I cannot but weep over you; though the lesser towns and villages shall be destroyed as well as the great ones, yet I weep not over them but over Jerusalem, for she hath had the means of grace more abundantly and yet hath not repented; and therefore I cannot but weep over it. When the rod comes, I say, it comes more directly to the great towns and cities of a nation.

God will be sure to punish those who are ringleaders of rebellion in a nation. Now great cities and towns if they are not good, are ringleaders to other towns to do evil; even as a great oak, which drops upon the lesser trees under him, spoils their growth and corrupts them. And so if a man be rich and not good, he drops upon others and spoils others. So I say, great towns if not good, spoil and corrupt the lesser towns and villages; as, if they be good, they are an help and an encouragement to others in goodness. Therefore the Lord's voice crieth unto the cities, and they should all hear the rod, and who hath appointed it. That is the fourth proposition. The fifth and main followeth, that,

Fifthly, When the Lord doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their true interest and best wisdom to hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

There are three things in this proposition:

1. When God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their duty to hear what the rod saith. And,

2. Not only to hear what the rod saith, but also to consider who hath appointed it. And,

3. It is their true interest and best wisdom so to do.

I shall not much insist upon these. But for the first:

1. When the Lord doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their duty to hear what the rod saith; for as you hear, God's rod is a teaching rod, and therefore when the rod comes, it is your duty to lay your ear close to the rod to hear what it says, for otherwise you will be found despisers of its message. If a king send his ambassador to speak and treat with another, and he turns his ear from him and will not hear him, why, will not he be found a despiser of the message? Now the rod is a messenger, an ambassador, and it comes from heaven; if you will not hear it, you despise the message of the rod. Not

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hearing is despising; therefore when the rod comes, hear the message of it. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Almighty," saith Solomon, Prov. iii. 11.

2. It is your duty to hear the rod, and also to consider who hath appointed it; not only to hear the instrument, but the author also whereby the rod is acted and guided. For

Thereby you will honour God in his dispensations. It was the speech of Mr. Dod when the soldiers broke into his house and plundered him, saith he, It is the Lord that hath taken them away. He did not say, This thing *they* have taken away, and *they* have taken away such and such things; no, he would not give them that honour, but as Job said, when the Sabeans took away his goods, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away;" so said he, I will not honour them so much, as to say that *they* have taken away any thing from me, but the Lord hath done it; and thereby he gives God the honour of his dispensations, and so must you if you will hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will much strengthen your faith.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will be enabled to submit sweetly to the sharp anger of God's dispensations: "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," saith David, Psalm xxxix. 9. So when Shimei cursed David, his servants would have taken off his head; No, saith David, "Let him alone, it is the Lord that hath bidden him," 2 Sam. xvi. 11. Mr. Fox makes mention of a young man, a martyr, that when he was upon the cart going to the fire, his father, who was a papist, came out of his house, and would have beaten him, but the people hindering him, Pray, said he, let him alone, for he is my father. So I say, by hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will submit unto the Lord, because he is your Father.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will be led to prayer, and be brought to pray. Prayer becomes a man or woman when they are under the rod. Pray tell me, when the child is whipped by his father, doth the child fall down to the rod, and beg of the rod to spare him? no, but he falls down to him in whose hand the rod is, to his master or his father, and cries to him, O spare me, pray spare me. So be not stubborn, but fall down to the Lord when you are

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under the rod, and say, Lord spare me. Do not say to the rod, Spare me; do not cry to that when it is upon your backs; no, but see God and observe his hand and cry to him for help. But then,

3. As it is our duty to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, so it is also our true interest and best wisdom to do it, because it is the way to prevent further strokes. When a child is under the rod and will not submit, Why, says the master, since you are so stout and so stubborn, I will try who shall be master, you or I. And so he strikes on still, until the child cries out, I have done: Why then, says the master, I have done too. And thus it is with us, when we are under the rod, if we be stubborn, and refuse to hear the rod of God and who hath appointed it, Well, says God, I will try who shall be master, you or I. What is the reason that some men go so long, so many years with the rod upon their backs, but because they have not heard the rod and who hath appointed it. But now when a man shall say, Lord, I have done; Why then, says God, I have done too, O soul.

Beloved, it is our best wisdom and our best course, to hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

All that I shall say for application is this: It is our true interest and best wisdom, when the rod comes, to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, as hath been proved.

Oh then that men were wise and did understand it in this day. O England, England, the rod is in thy streets at this time; certainly there is a swinging rod hangs over this nation. O England, what shall I say unto thee, but what the prophet saith here, "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." O London, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it." O Norwich, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it." O Yarmouth, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it;" for you shall thereby honour God and strengthen your own faith, you shall be able to keep silence in the evil day; you shall be made more fit to pray, and the rod will be sooner removed from you. Therefore as you desire that God may have the honour of all his dispensations, and that your faith may be strengthened, and that you may be enabled to be silent in an evil day; then "Hear the rod and who hath appointed it."

But you will say, What shall we do that we may hear the

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rod and who hath appointed it? We do confess that there is a smart rod upon the back of this nation, and upon the back of our families; but what shall we do that we may hear the rod and who hath appointed it?

I answer, stand and look upon the rod, and you will find two things especially in the rod:

1. Your sin. And 2. God's design.

As for your sin, look what sin that is which God holds before your face, before your conscience, all the time he is striking of you with the rod, that is the sin he strikes you for. If a dog worry a sheep, you commonly go and beat the dog in the face of the worried sheep, that the dog may thereby know and understand for what he is beaten: so when the Lord comes and holds out one sin for you to look on especially, then you may be sure the rod comes upon you for that sin.

Again, Look what sin that is which doth naturally bring the rod, that is the cause of it. As for example, if a man be drunk, and do thereby bring himself into a fever, will you not say that drunkenness was the cause of it?

Again, Look what sin that is which is most like the rod of all others; that sin is that which brings the rod. As for example, suppose the rod of this nation be decay of trading, may we not think that some stolen wedge of gold is in this nation, which is the cause of this rod, because it is like it. Or suppose the rod of this nation be, the Lord's forsaking of it; may we not think that apostacy is the cause of it, because it is like it. Therefore, if you would hear the rod and who hath appointed it, then observe what sin that is which is the cause of it. But,

2. And so to conclude, as you are to look upon your sin, so also upon God's design in the rod. Now God seldom or never gives any mercy to a people, but he first brings them into the quite contrary condition. As for example, if God intends to give you great assurance of his love, he will first suffer you to fall into great temptations and darkness, that he may thereby fit you for great assurance. Or if God intend to raise you to great honour in the world, he will first suffer you to lie under some great reproach, that you may be thereby the more fit for your honour. And so if God intend to fix and settle a nation, he will first suffer it to come into

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great confusion and tumult, because the Lord will thereby prepare that nation for the glorious settlement which he intends.

How is is it therefore with you; do you feel or see the rod of God upon this nation, or upon your families, or upon the back of your own particular person? then "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." For God's rod is a teaching rod, and it brings many lessons with it. Therefore what I say to one, I say to all, and to my own soul also, "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

SERMON VII.

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God; O Israel."—AMOS IV. 12.

IN this chapter the prophet Amos endeavours to pronounce some heavy judgments against God's own people, Israel, wherein there are three things most considerable:

1. The judgment threatened.
2. The cause of the judgment. And
3. The inference thereupon.

1. The judgment threatened. And that is in the 2nd and 3rd verses: "The Lord hath sworn by his holiness, that lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks." As if he should say, I will send anglers among you, that shall pull you out of your houses, as the little fishes are pulled out of the water. And then he goes on in the 3rd verse, "And ye shall go out at the breaches, saith the Lord." Though you be great and strong, yet will I make breaches among you, saith the Lord. This is the judgment threatened.

2. Here is the cause of the judgment, and that is threefold:

Oppression, as at the 1st verse: "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy," and so forth.

Another cause is idolatry, and superstition; as at verses 4, 5, "Come ye to Bethel, and transgress at Gilgal, multiply

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transgression; proclaim and publish the free offering, for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

The third cause is their incorrigibleness, as at verse 6, "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned to me, saith the Lord." And at verse 7, "And also I have withholden rain from you, and I have caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another city, so two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, but they were not satisfied, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 9, "I have smitten you with blasting and with mildew, when your gardens, and your vineyards, and your figtrees, and your olive trees increased, the palmer worm devoured them, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 10, "I have sent among you the pestilence, after the manner of Egypt, your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses, and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 11, "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

Thirdly, Therefore by way of inference he concludes;

"Therefore this will I do unto thee O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

In these words you have a double inference which God makes.

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, I have been a long time striving with you, as if he should say, and I have been at a stand whether I should punish you or not, yet have ye not returned unto me, therefore now I am resolved, "thus will I do unto thee." And then

Now I am resolved, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, therefore do thou prepare to meet thy God, O Israel; I do not send you a challenge, saith God, that you should prepare to meet with your God to fight with him, or to resist him, not to meet God in his anger and to oppose him, no; but prepare to meet thy God by preventing his judgments, with your repentance, and returning unto him. If a man be coming to your house, and you go out to meet him, why then

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you prevent him by meeting of him; so when we prevent God's judgments by our repentance, we are said to meet with God.

From hence then I take up this observation or doctrine.

That when God is resolved to come out against a nation or people, it is their duty to prepare to meet with God.

For the opening and prosecuting hereof I shall labour to shew you,

First, That God doth seem sometimes to be at a stand concerning a people, whether he should trust to them any longer or not, or whether he should punish them or not.

Secondly, That if they do not come to him, and meet with him, he will then resolve to go out against them in his wrath.

Thirdly, That when God doth resolve to go out against a people in his wrath, it is their duty to prepare to meet him.

Fourthly, I shall labour to shew, how a people or family or person, may prepare themselves to meet with God in the way of his anger, when he is going out against them.

First, Though God is always resolved in himself what to do with a people, yet he seems to us to be at a stand, whether he should deliver them or not, or whether he should punish them or not, whether he should shew mercy to them or not; as you may see Exod. xxxiii. 5, "For the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, ye are a stiffnecked people; I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment and consume thee; therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee," that I may shew, or make known what to do unto thee, as it is in the Hebrew: this is speaking after the manner of men; and so in Gen. xviii. 21, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not I will know;" and again, Gen. xxii. 12, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God;" speaking after the manner of men. And again Hosea vi. 4, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee, O Judah, what shall I do unto thee;" and Hosea xi. 8, "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee Israel, how shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim:" here are four hows in our translation, though but two in the Hebrew, "How shall I give thee up, how shall I deliver thee, how shall I make thee as Admah,

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how shall I set thee as Zeboim:" as if the Lord, to speak after the manner of men, were in a great strait, and knew not what to do, was not resolved what to do; so I say though God is always resolved in himself, yet he seems to us to be at a stand sometimes, whether he shall shew mercy or no.

But you will say, how doth this come to pass, that God doth sometimes seem to be thus at a stand.

I answer, you know how it is with a tender father, that hath a rebellious child; saith the father, I will thrust him out of doors, I will utterly cast him off, I have often admonished him and threatened him and corrected him, and yet he is never the better, therefore I am resolved even to turn him out of doors; aye, but then he reflects and thinks again, He is my child, he is the son of my bowels, how shall I, how can I give him up, how can I turn him out of doors? Why now God is more tender to his children, than any father can be to his children, and therefore his being at a stand doth speak out and declare his bowels to his people: his bowels are at work whilst their sins provoke him; one while he looks upon their sins and another while he looks upon Christ's satisfaction; one while he hears the law call, Justice, justice, another while he hears Christ cry, Mercy, mercy; there is justice and mercy both in God, that he may have the honour of both, and therefore God seems to be at a stand sometimes; says God, These are my people, and if I punish them the enemies will reproach me, and I shall be dishonoured, and they are my people still for all their sinning against me, and thus God seems to be at a stand.

But you will say, When may God seem to be at a stand, and not to be resolved what to do speaking after the manner of men.

I answer, when the saints and ministers of God know not what is best to be done in regard of the times, then is God at a stand, for, saith the Lord, "Shall I do any thing, and not reveal it to my servants the prophets:" therefore I say when the saints and servants and ministers of God are at a stand, and know not what to do, then, God seems to be at a stand.

When the dispensations of God go forward and backward, then the Lord seems to be at a stand; when a man goes out of his house about his business, and goes forward and back-

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ward in the street, you will say, that man is not well resolved what to do, nor which way to go; and thus it seems to be sometimes with God, his dispensations in the world go forward and backward, and this is the time that God is as it were at a stand, whether he shall shew mercy or no; and so I have done with the first general.

Secondly, That though God seem to be at a stand sometimes, yet if men do not come unto him and meet him, he will resolve to go forth against them, "Therefore thus will I do unto thee:" I have been a long time striving with you, and yet have ye not returned unto me, and now I am resolved, and this is God's message.

Now for the clearing of this.

I shall open the truth of it unto you.

I shall prove it. And,

I shall shew you, when God may be said to go forth against a people or nation.

For opening of it, you must not think, as I said before, that God is at any time unresolved in himself, or that he knows not what to do, no, "For known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world," unto the end, says the apostle, Acts xv. 18. There is nothing future, or to come, to God; God is not measured, neither doth he measure by time; there is nothing before nor after with God in eternity; all is present and altogether before him at once, and therefore I say, God is not at any time unresolved in himself, what he shall do with this or that people. Now further, God is said to will a thing in a twofold respect, either in regard

Of his decree, or

Of his dispensations.

In regard of his decree, his love is from eternity and yet the same man may seem to be a child of wrath in regard of the dispensation. Every elect person is a child of God from eternity in regard of God's decree, and yet he is a child of wrath until he be converted in regard of God's dispensations. So when I say, that God seems to be at a stand and unresolved, and that if men do not come unto him he will then go forth against them; this is not to be understood in regard of his decree, but in regard of his dispensations. But

For the proof of it. It is said, "God will not always

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strive with the children of men," neither will he always wait and expect fruit from a fruitless and barren people; read the parable of the fig tree, Luke xiii. 7: "A certain man had a fig tree &c. and he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come, seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground." Now though this parable doth concern the Jews, it concerns us also, wherein we may see there are three times, which go over the heads of all those that sit under the gospel.

A time of soul mercy; a time of God's forbearance; and a time of judgment or cutting down.

There is a time of forbearance and striving, a time when God seems to be at a stand, but then if men will not come unto him, he will resolve to go forth against them. Rom. ii. 4, 5: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." So I say that though God seem to be at a stand as to his dispensations, yet if men do not come in unto him, he will then resolve to go forth against them in his wrath.

But you will say further, when may God be said to go forth against a nation or people in his anger.

For answer you may know it by God's dispensations, if his dispensations do bespeak so much, and do plainly declare that God is going forth against a nation or people, then you may be sure that he is resolved to go forth in his anger: and therefore,

Observe when a judgment comes that is extraordinary, then the Lord is gone out against that people. "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands," Ps. ix. 16.

Look when God restrains prayer from a people, when he knocks off and draws off the hearts of his children from praying for such a people, then is God certainly come out against them in his wrath.

When all things work together for the worst, then the Lord is against that people; when all things instead of working

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together for the best, do the contrary, and work together for the worst, then is God surely against that people.

As you may know when God is resolved to go out against a people in his dispensations, so you may also know it by our practices. As when God afflicts a people for crying sins, and yet incorrigibleness follows, then doth the Lord resolve to go against that people in wrath. As you may see in this chapter wherein our text is, there you find the people were guilty of great sins, of great oppression, and great superstition and idolatry, and God did not only afflict them for these sins but for others too, and therefore you find in the 7th verse, "I have withheld the rain from you, and have caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another." Here was distinction of judgments according to their several sins. And so at the 11th verse: "I have overthrown you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as firebrands plucked out of the burning." &c. God exercised them with several afflictions, and they were distinguishing afflictions too, and yet they were incorrigible; God tells them that he had afflicted them with cleanness of teeth and want of rain, "and yet have they not returned unto me, saith the Lord, thereforethus will I do unto thee," &c. Thus you see what distinguishing afflictions they were exercised with, "I have sent the pestilence among you, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord;" and yet after all these sore strokes, they still remained incorrigible, and therefore God was resolved to go forth against them in his wrath, and so I have done with the second general.

Thirdly, It is the duty of a people or nation to prepare to meet the Lord, when he is coming out against them. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do thus, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

For the clearing of this I shall endeavour to shew you:

That it is a dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger and justice.

That though it be dreadful, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as to others.

That though it be not so dreadful to the people of God as to others, yet it is very uncomfortable for them too to meet with God in his wrath.

That when God is gone forth against a people in his anger,

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and in the way of his wrath, it is their duty to prepare to meet with God.

It is a very dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger, "Who may abide the day of his wrath? It is a fearful thing (saith the apostle) to fall into the hand of the living God," Heb. x. 31; "For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29, not a warming fire. There is a warming fire in your houses, and that is very comfortable in cold weather, but there is a consuming fire also, a fire that burns down houses and cities, and that fire is very terrible and dreadful; why our God is a consuming fire; your fire consumes your wood and coal, but it doth not consume your house, it doth not remove the rocks; but the fire of God's anger doth so, as you may see, Nahum i. 5, 6, "The mountains quake at him, the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea the world, and all that dwell therein; who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide the fierceness of his anger, his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Thus you see it is a very dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger. But

Though it be dreadful and terrible, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as to others.

Though God be angry with his own people; yet it is but little in comparison to what he is with others; as in Zech. i. 2: "The Lord was sore displeased with your fathers," and at the 12th verse, there it is said, "God had indignation against them threescore and ten years," and then at the 15th verse: "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction." Here you see God was greatly displeased with the heathen, and but little displeased against his people; his displeasure is but little to them in comparison with what it is to others.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet his anger is their friend. If a man be my friend, not only his purse is my friend, but his sword also, if I have occasion; so if God be my friend, not only his love is my friend, but his anger too; but it is not so with the wicked.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they have

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always free grace to fly unto and to be their friend; but it is not thus with the wicked.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know, or may know that God is in covenant with them, and that they have some sweet and precious promises which belong to them. "Who can abide the fierceness of his wrath," &c., Nahum i. 5, 6. But look at the 7th verse, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him." In the worst times the people of God have promises to run unto for shelter: mark how the promise comes in here; having shewed the fierceness of God's wrath in the 5th and 6th verses, "Who can stand before his presence," &c.; he comes in with this promise at the 7th verse, "The Lord is good, and a strong hold in the day of trouble; he knoweth them that trust in him."

Though God be angry with and afflict his own people, yet they know, or may know that God is afflicted with them, Christ partakes in their afflictions with them.

Though God do afflict his own people for their sins, yet they know, or may know that God always gives a due allowance in reference to their sins and infirmities; the best gold must have an allowance of some dross, and the best saint must have an allowance upon the account of his infirmities. Says the Lord, Hosea xi. 8, "How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim?" Why did not the Lord say, How shall I make thee as Sodom or Gomorrah? says Jerome, it was because Admah and Zeboim were lesser cities, and were drawn into sin by the example of the great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah: and so the ten tribes were drawn into sin by the great cities of Judah and by Jerusalem, and therefore God says, "How shall I make thee as Admah," &c. So, I say, God doth always give an allowance to his own people, even in the day of his wrath.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they may see God smile sometimes, even through his frowns. Faith doth many times pull the vizard from the face of Christ, as I may say, that when he seems to be their enemy, yet still they know that all things shall work together for their good.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know, or may know, that God will always have a hiding-place for

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them, and so he will never provide for others. It may be observed, that when God's people in former times were persecuted in one part of the world, they had always acceptance and entertainment in some other part of the world; and when they were persecuted from thence, they had still acceptance elsewhere, according to that of Christ, "If they persecute you in one city, flee unto another, until the Son of Man come," Matt. x. 23. Why what is the meaning of this, but that God will always have some hiding-place for his people, until Christ come again.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know or may know that they are delivered from wrath to come, and they may comfort themselves thus: It is true that this dispensation of God toward me is in anger, but yet I am delivered from wrath to come. But now it is not so with others. The present dispensations of God's wrath upon the wicked, are but forerunners of his eternal wrath which shall come upon them. But it is not so with the saints. And so I conclude this second particular, That though it be very dreadful when God goes forth against a people in his wrath, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as it is to others. But,

Though it be not so terrible for the people of God to meet with God in his anger, and as it is for others; yet it is a very hard and uncomfortable thing for them to meet with God in this way, for they are used to have other kind of meetings with God, they use to meet him in the assemblies, to meet him in love, there the saints desire to meet with God. But,

If God do go forth against a people in his wrath, it is their duty, the duty of them all, and of God's own people also, to go forth to meet God. It is here commanded in the text, by way of reason. It is the duty of God's people and of others also, to honour God when they are under his dispensations. Now when men go forth to meet God, then they honour him. Abraham and Lot intended to honour the angel, and therefore they went forth to meet him; Joseph would honour his father Jacob, and therefore he went forth to meet him; Moses would honour his father Jethro, and therefore he went forth to meet him; Abigail would honour David, and therefore she went forth to meet him; Martha

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would honour Christ, and therefore went forth to meet him; Cornelius and the believing Romans would honour Paul, and therefore they went forth to meet him. And so if a man be coming to your house, if you would honour him, you go forth to meet him. Why now it is our duty to honour God, and therefore it is our duty also to prepare to meet with God, that we may thereby honour him.

And further, it is the duty of all God's people to hold a compliance with his dispensations. Now if you do not go to meet with God, you do not comply with his dispensations. So that I say, when God comes forth against a people, it is their duty to go forth and to prepare to meet him. And so I come to the fourth general which was proposed.

Fourthly, If it be the duty of a people, when God goes forth against them in his anger, to prepare to meet him; why then what shall we do to prepare ourselves to meet with God, for sometimes God seems to be at a stand, and to be unresolved what to do, and sometimes he is resolved to go forth against a people: now what shall we do that we may prepare to meet God in both these cases?

I shall answer these two questions, and speak to them distinctly, and so conclude without any further application.

If you would meet with God in this case, then break off from your uncertainties and leave them. Do not stand, Shall I, shall I? as we say, in reference to your repentance and newness of life, be not uncertain in your judgments and practices. As in Hosea vi. 4, "O Ephraim (saith God), what shall I do unto thee?" Why, Lord, might they say, why art thou at an uncertainty with us? Why, saith God, because you are at an uncertainty with me; your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. Sometimes you take up good resolutions, but they fade away again presently; sometimes you are grieved and troubled for sin, but your repentance fades away as the morning dew; sometimes you will perform duties, but your goodness fades away quickly: and therefore I am at this uncertainty with you, because you are at such uncertainty with me. Would you then meet with God in this case, why then break off from your uncertainties, that is the first.

If God seem to be at a stand, then do you repent and turn

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to God, for this is that which God expects and looks for, "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." The Lord repeats it again and again, in the close of several verses, though I have been at a stand, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore, I say, when God seems to be at a stand, be sure that you return unto God; and what I say unto one, I say unto all, and to my own soul also: Doth the Lord seem to be at a stand with us, then let us all return to the Lord by repentance, it may be he stays his hand to see what we will do.

If God seem to be at a stand, and if you would meet with him, then go and make your choice: Chuse rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

If the Lord seem to be at an uncertainty in point of his dispensations, and if you would meet with God, then take heed that you do not desire the woeful day, take heed that there be none among you who do desire the woeful day to come. A day of confusion in a nation is a woeful day, a day of civil war is a woeful day, civil war begins with uncivil sins, and ends in uncivil butcheries. Again,

If God seem to be at a stand in point of his dispensations, and if temptations do then come to draw you off from God, then do you answer all with this: How shall I do this thing and yet not sin against God, how shall I do this thing and yet not sin against my own conscience; shall the Lord have his *hows* for you as I may say, and will you have none for him? Shall the Lord say, How shall I give thee up, O England! How shall I give thee up, O London! How shall I give thee up, O Yarmouth! and will not you say, How shall I sin against the Lord; shall the Lord's bowels yearn and turn within him for you, and shall not you turn to God? Shall the Lord say, O drunkard, how shall I give thee up? O swearer, how shall I give thee up? O sabbath-breaker, how shall I give thee up? O unclean person or the like, how shall I give thee up? And shall not you say, How shall I do this thing and yet not sin against God? Therefore do thus and then you will be able to meet with God in this case.

But as for the second part of this question. Suppose the

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Lord be resolved, as I hope he is not, to go forth against this nation, you may observe how he stands hovering as it were over the nation; but if God should resolve to go out against us, would you know how to prepare to meet with God?

Then you must observe what those evils are that do provoke God, and labour and strive against them till they be removed; and in order hereunto,

If you would meet with God in the way of his justice and anger, then you must get Christ into your arms, as I may say, and so go forth and meet God. It is written of one, that when he would gain favour of his king, he used to get the king's son in his arms, and so he got the favour he desired; so if you would find favour with God, get Jesus Christ into your arms, and so go forth to meet him.

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger and justice, then you must humble yourself before him and submit unto him: there are two parts in humiliation, sorrow for sin, and submission to God; now it may be you are wanting in one of those, therefore labour to abound in both, and so go forth to meet God.

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger and justice, then do you live justly, and deal justly and righteously. "He hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8. Oh, my friends, labour to do what God commands and what God expects: now when he comes out against a people in the way of his justice, he expects that they should be found doing justice; read verse 9, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it:" God's voice is to scare us, and to cause us to leave sin and to turn unto him, and therefore he says, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger, then present unto God your free will offerings, and pray unto him and seek his face. When Jacob went forth to meet his brother Esau, he sent presents to him, and his brother's face was changed. Oh, what will become of those that never prayed one prayer more in private for all this anger and wrath of God that seems to be coming out against us!

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If you would meet with God in his anger, then get suffering grace: how can you be able to meet with God in the way of his anger in suffering times, if you have not suffering grace?

If you would meet with God in his anger, be sure to be doing the work of your present day. Shew mercy to those that want mercy. They that are merciful shall obtain mercy with God. What will your money avail you in the day of God's wrath? The only way to meet with God in his wrath is to shew mercy.

If you would be able to meet with God in the way of his anger, then wait upon God in the way of his judgments, and in due time you shall be able to say, This is our God; "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him;" and if God be going, lay hold of him, take hold upon him, for so we are commanded. Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, "Fury is not in me," &c. Or, "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger, then lay aside your particular interests, and think it your duty and desire to do it.

If you would prepare to meet with God in the way of his anger, then now, whilst you have a little time, go and set yourself and your house in order, that whatsoever may come, you may have nothing else to do but to die; and then if God do come in judgment and anger, you may be able to say, I have heard the rod and have trembled and have prepared to meet with God. And if God should not come in wrath, but some other way, yet you will have great comfort in your preparing to meet with God. For either God will come out against the nation in anger or he will not; if he do not, you will not lose by your preparing to meet him; but if he do, and you are prepared to meet with him, then will God meet with you in love, because you have prepared to meet with him in anger.

Therefore as you desire to be found doing the work that God would have you to do in this case, think of and remember what hath been spoken. All you that hear this word of God, prepare to meet with God; you know not how soon the Lord may come out against you in wrath, his dispensations in the world seem to run backward and forward: therefore be

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always ready and prepared to meet with God, which way soever he may come, according to this of our text: "Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do thus unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

END OF VOL. II.

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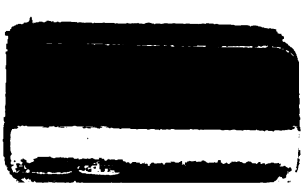

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